

**GUY PICARDA**

# **MINSK**

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## **A Historical Guide**

and

Short Administrative, Professional  
and Commercial Directory

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**MINSK — LONDON**

**'TECHNALOHIIA'**

**1994**



*A la mémoire de mon aieul François Abraham Rosier (1793-1871)  
lequel, attaché au 1er corps de Cavalerie du G1 E..Nansouty sous  
le commandement du Maréchal Louis Davout, Prince d'Eckmuhl,  
parcourut deux fois la terre biélorussienne en 1812.*

**Independent Publishing Company 'Technalohija'**

It is one of the first books in English of this kind about the Republic of Belarus and its capital — Minsk (which is also the capital of the CIS). It is intended for the foreign visitors of the Republic, students of English Departments and everyone interested in the history and the present of Belarus. First edition.

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## REVIEW

“MINSK: A Historical Guide And Short Administrative, Professional and Commercial Directory” is one of the first books of this kind in English about the Republic of Belarus and its capital — Minsk (which is also the capital of the CIS). It provides a serious historic and geographic analysis of the formation and development of the Belarusian nation and statehood though the majority of Belarusians won't agree with the author upon his interpretation of some events of modern history, especially upon Belarus in World War II.

Belarusian literature, music, painting and, especially, architecture have been studied most thoroughly by the author and are presented in a very vivid form. Besides, the reader will find essential reference information about Minsk and Minsk Region. So this book will be very helpful to foreign businessmen, tourists and students visiting Belarus for the first time.

The spelling of some proper names and Belarusian words (which are quite numerous in the Guide) might appear quite strange as the author seems to be influenced by Polish spellings which can be quite misleading. To avoid this, you should note the following as the Belarusian realities are concerned:

- |                                             |                             |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| — 'c' stands for 'ts'                       | e.g. Savicki = Savitski;    |
| — 'j' stands for 'y'                        | e.g. Volnaja = Volnaya;     |
| — 'ch' stands for 'kh'                      | e.g. Chaladnik = Khaladnik; |
| — 'č' stands for 'ch'                       | e.g. Kantyčka = Kantychka;  |
| — 'š' stands for 'sh'                       | e.g. Škola = Shkola;        |
| — 'ž' stands for 'zh' = [ʒ], as in 'vision' | e.g. vieža = viezha.        |

We hope this book will help you to learn better our native land and its people — peaceful, hard-working, patient, hospitable and convivial.

***Valeriy Kaminskiy (BA, Minsk Linguistic University).***



## PREFACE

The present book is designed to assist the English speaking visitor to Minsk in discovering not only locations and places of interest, but also something of the Belarusian capital's unusual and historic past. Whilst the ancient capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś was Vilnia, now in the Republic of Lithuania, Minsk together with Navahradak and Horadnia has long ranked as a Royal city, and as early as the 11th century was the capital of a Principality in its own right, as well as owing allegiance to the Princes of Polacak. It was the residence of many Princes and Grand Dukes — Hleb Usiaslavič, Valadar Hlebavič, Erdzivil, Jaúnut Hedyminavič, Michal Jaúnutavič, Jahajla, Alexander Jahajlavič (who in 1499 granted the city the Magdeburg Privilege) Sigismund or Žyhimunt II and Stefan Batory. It was a session town of the High Court of the Grand Duchy and the seat of a Court of Appeal in 1791. From 1793 it has been the seat of a Roman Catholic Bishopric and episodically the See of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (1921, 1943), as well as the seat of a Russian Orthodox Eparchy. In addition to its commercial and strategic importance, Minsk was an important centre of Jewish and Islamic life. Despite a history of destruction by fire and warfare, this cosmopolitan city has retained many charming memories of the past, whilst acquiring in more recent times the characteristics of an impressive and go-ahead European capital. Its quiet lanes, churches, museums and cultural establishments have much to interest the visitor, whilst friendly hospitality and fine food are to be had in its attractive restaurants cafes and bars. There are increasingly attractive goods available in its boutiques and department stores.

From Belaruś came the artists Master Andrej z Litvy, Skaryna, Maniuška, Glinka, Ivan Chrucki, Marc Chagall, Soutine, Zadkine, Aaron Copeland and Irving Berlin. To Belaruś came Geoffrey Chaucer's Knight, the Belarusian Tristan, Queen Bona Sforza, Charles XII of Sweden and Napoleon Bonaparte. Call it's colourful capital the Golden city, *Kachany horad* ("the dear old town") or what you will, a stay in historic Minsk with its leafy avenues, broad river and forests is a unique and refreshing experience.



# GENERAL INFORMATION AND GUIDE





## MAP OF BELARUŚ

**Boundaries:** Boundaries shown on this map are those of the Republic of Belarus, and do not include the entire Belarusian ethnic territory parts of which extend into neighboring states.  
**Total Area:** 80,130 square miles (207,600 square km).  
**Elevation:** Highest — Mount Dzierżyński (1,135 feet or 346 meters); lowest — Prypiat Marshes (279 feet or 85 meters).  
**Population:** 10,151,808 (1989 census): Belarusians 78%, Russians 13%, Poles 4%, Ukrainians 3%, Jews about 1%.  
**Capital City:** Minsk (population 1.6 million).  
**Regional (vobiasć) Capitals:** Horadnia, Bieraście, Viciebsk,

Mahiloŭ and Homiel.

**Major Languages:** Belarusian (the state language), Russian, Polish.

**Major Religious Groups:** Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic.

**National Flag:** White-red-white.

**National Emblem:** Pahonia (a knight on horseback in pursuit of enemy).

**National Anthem:** Carry-over from Soviet Byelorussia (work on a new one in progress).

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*A thorough map of Minsk and surroundings is available at news-agents.*



# THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

Minsk is the Capital of the Republic of Belarus, a state comprising most of the lands inhabited by the Belarusian people, with the exception of Smalensk. The country lies strategically placed at the watershed of the Baltic and Black Sea river systems, between Poland and Lithuania to the west, Russia to the north and east and Ukraine to the south.

With a total area of 230.000 km<sup>2</sup>, and a population approximating 11.000.000, Belarus is about the same size as Great Britain (240.000 km<sup>2</sup>), with a population well in excess of Bulgaria, Portugal, Belgium or Sweden. The climate is continental temperate. Almost one third of the country is forest land. Its economy is dominated by light industry (Engineering, textiles, electronics, minerals, tobacco, brewing) and agriculture (Cereals and dairy products).

Little was known until recently about this Eastern Slavic nation (variously called *Byelorussia*, *White Russia*, *White Ruthenia*, *Kryvič*). Historically part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, it regained its full Independence, after 194 years of alien rule by the Russians and Poles, on the 25th August 1991.

Politically the rebirth of the nation, heralded by Kastus Kalinoŭski in 1863, dates back to the Proclamation of Belarusian Independence made in Minsk on 25th March 1918 during the closing stages of the First World War, and the re-affirmation of Belarus' role as a political entity on 1st January 1919.

The original Belarusian Tribes — the *Kryvičy* (Belarus has sometimes been known as *Kryvič*), *Dryhvičy*, *Radzimičy*, *Lucičy* and *Sievieranie*, were related to the Baltic nations, and grouped in independant principalities, of which the most powerful was Polacak, a river port and fortress on the river Dzvina, which flows into the Baltic Sea. The princes of Minsk owed allegiance to the principality of Polacak, until they were united, by marriage and political expediency, into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belarus (*Magnus Ducatus Lithuaniae et Russia Alba*).

Its position in Eastern Europe was not unlike that of the ancient Duchy of Burgundy in the West. The middle-Belarusian language was the official State language of the united Grand Duchy from the 13th to the late 17th century, and the Code of Laws of 1588 — the *Litoŭski Statut* (Lithuanian Statute) was a compilation in that language. During



this period Belarusan culture flourished to its highest level and developed its distinctive quality in almost every field.

The scholar, engraver and mystic Francisk Skaryna (c.1485-1545), the legislator Leú Sapieha (1557-1633), the church-musician Bohdan Anisimovič (fl.1598-1601) and the iconographical Master of Malarita (fl.1640) stand out, with the Byzantino-Gothic churches of Malamažajsk and Suprasl (1511) and the castle of Mir (c.1510), as examples of the degree of excellence achieved.

However, continuing wars of conquest by the Tatars and Muscovites had driven the Grand Dukes successively into dynastic (1386), then political (1569) and finally ecclesiastical (1596) Union with the Kingdom of Poland. The old principalities were remoulded into Vajavodships (Provinces), though the status of the Kingdom and Grand Duchy remained that of a dual Monarchy with separate laws and customs, known as the *Rečpaspalitaja* (Commonwealth) until 1795. The economic and military fortunes of the Grand Duchy fluctuated after 1569, but from 1653 to 1668 during a catastrophic ravaging of Belaruś by the Russian Tsar Alexis, as much as one half of its total population was killed or taken into captivity. Thereafter a cultural decline set in, and the Belarusan language was increasingly displaced by Polish, and later by Russian.

The three partitions of the Commonwealth in 1775, 1793 and 1795 left the whole of Belaruś under Russian rule, and the nine old provinces of Vilnia, Polacak, Viciebsk, Navahradak, Minsk, Mscislaú, Smalensk and Bierascie were replaced by *gubernii* or governments on the Tsarist model. National Uprisings in 1812, 1831 and 1863 were put down with increasing violence, followed by relentless russification. After the particularly widespread revolt under Kastus Kalinoŭski (1838-1864), author of the bitingly successful newssheet *Mužyckaja Praŭda* ("Peasants Truth") calling for national liberation, the printing of the Belarusan language was prohibited, with the exception of ethnographic material; the name of the country itself - *Belaruś*, was suppressed and it became the "North West Region" (*Severo-zapadnyj kraj*) of the Russian Empire.

Nevertheless the phenomenal advance of Belarusan studies in the late 19th century with the publication of regional ethnographical material, including the first "Dictionary of the Belarusan Language" (1870) by I. Nasovič (1788-1877), helped lay the foundations of modern Belaruś as a nation. A revival of the literary Belarusan language, expressed by a remarkable school of poets - Janka Kupala and Jakub Kolas, Zmitrok Biadula, Maxim Bahdanovič and Aleś Harun - through the Journal *Naša*



*Niva* ("Our Cornfield"), led to a widespread resurgence of national feeling after 1906. When the armies of the Central Powers drove the Russian forces out of most of Belaruś, the Belarusian National Council representing the old provinces of Minsk, Mahiloú, Horadnia, Vilnia, Viciebsk, Smalensk and Čarnihaú - proclaimed the country's independence on 25th March 1918.

Despite Bolshevik intervention, a restored, if only partial Belarusian State had become a reality, and notwithstanding its incorporation into the Soviet Union, the country acquired after 1st. January 1919 most of the trappings of sovereignty - a President, a Parliament and Government with Ministries, a State University and Library, an Academy of Sciences and other national institutions. In 1939 Western Belaruś, occupied since 1921 by Poland, was united to the Republic, and in 1947 Belaruś was admitted as a founding member of the United Nations. The reunited country was divided into six *voblastsi* ("regions"): Minsk, Viciebsk, Mahiloú, Homiel, Bierascie and Horadnia, corresponding roughly to the ethnic territory of Belaruś.

In difficult ideological conditions and amid renewed Bolshevik attempts to impose Russian as an "international" language, Belarusian scholars, writers and artists, with support from Belarusian migrants overseas, began in the 1960s to revive the national ideal, in place of the fading dream of a Utopian socialist society. The wish for independence from inefficient over-centralisation was largely stimulated in the 1980s by the ghastly effects of the explosion at the nuclear power station of Čarnabył in Ukraine, and the rediscovery of the historic past of Belaruś, more particularly the mass graves of a generation of writers, scholars and innocent citizens massacred by Stalin's Bolsheviks at Kurapaty outside Minsk in 1937-1941. From 1987 onwards the normally placid Belarusian people began to rally in mass, and increasingly violent protest.

Independence was finally conceded after a failed "Old Guard" *coup d'état* in Moscow on 25th August 1991, although free, democratic elections in Belaruś will be the only guarantee of that Independence for the future. For, as Kastus Kalinoúski declared in one of his memorable lapidary pronouncements: "The People are not created for government, but government for the people" (*Mužyckaja Praúda*, 1862 ).



## CHARACTER, CUSTOMS AND CULTURE OF THE BELARUSAN PEOPLE

*Population, social structure, laws, mythology, customs, national character, language and literature, music, architecture, sculpture, painting and cuisine. International Belarusan Studies.*

Until recently relatively little was known in the West about the **Population** of Belaruś, or indeed about any of the nations between the Vistula and Moscow. The Polish and Russian rulers of these land made little effort, for their own reasons, to expand upon the nationhood of their "Eastern territories" or "North Western regions". Whenever official recognition of a Belarusan presence was required, it came in the most discreet form, with the words "regional", "dialect", and "folklore" much evidence. Even the inhabitants, whether out of ignorance or prudence, were until recently wont to refer to themselves as *Tutejšyja* ("Locals" or "local yokels"). Despite these strictures, and the fundamentally unsympathetic attitudes of the formerly dominant Russian and Polish administrative and ecclesiastical establishments, a broad-based resurgence of the national culture and literary language over the last century has led to a revival of national awareness amongst the Belarusans. Like the Finno-Carelians the Italo-Greeks, the Slovaks and the Moldavians, the Belarusans share in a unique Byzantino-Gothic heritage which distinguishes them from their eastern and western neighbours.

Although the Belarusans belong to the East Slavic ethnic group, there is a strong admixture of Baltic and Scandinavian elements in their racial, linguistic and cultural background, much of present-day Western Belaruś having been sparsely inhabited in former times by Letto-Lithuanian tribes. A relatively high proportion of the population is fair-haired and blue-eyed, though inhabitants of the northern regions tend to be taller in stature than the more stockily built southerners from Palessia. The presence of significant Jewish and Tatar minorities account for certain distinctively oriental traits apparent in some individuals. During the present century improvements in diet and living conditions are reflected in the generally healthier appearance of the populace than in the days of impoverishment under foreign rule in the 18th and 19th centuries.



The **Social structure** of Belaruś was conditioned by the political and economic conditions prevailing in the principalities which ultimately merged into the Grand Duchy. In former times the Belarusan nobility derived either from the *Hedyminovičy* or from the so-called *Rurikovičy*, according to their descent from the ruling Baltic houses or from Scandinavian princely stock. Lying on the Eastern verges of Europe they lived on an almost permanent war-footing in the face of threatened invasions from the marauding inhabitants of the Tatar steppes. The more powerful Belarusan magnates - the Sapieha, Radzivil, Tyškievič, Zavyša, Sanhuška, Haraburda, Chadkievič and other magnates lived in strategic, stone-built, fortified castles of which the Grand Ducal fortresses at Hrodna and Lida, with those of Mir (Illinich, Radzivil) and Halšany (Sapieha) are impressive examples. The most effective protection of Belaruś against invasions from the East, however, lay in the thick belts of impenetrable primaeval forests and the river barriers of the Dniapro, Dzvina and Berezina, secured by the fortress cities of Polack, Viciebsk, Vorša, Smalensk, and Mahilou. Until the 16th century many noblemen lived in solidly built but comfortable timber-frame mansions protected by earth-works, stockades and occasionally brickwork towers and ramparts. The dense, pathless forests to the East were their main defence. More than elsewhere in Europe, their status rested on military obligations to maintain the peace and answer the call to arms of the Grand Ducal Supreme *Hetman* (Commander-in-chief) and provincial *Vajavods* (Lords-Constable); their grants of land were received in consideration of the due performance of their knight-service. These high officers of the realm were entitled to bear their family arms augmented by the arms of the Grand Duchy or of the province, county or city forming their appanage. Until the 19th century many of the high nobility still spoke the Belarusan language, in which the law of the land, recording their duties and privileges (*Litoúski Statut* 1529, 1566 and 1588), as well as a number of historical chronicles and mediaeval courtly tales (The Romances of *Tryšťan*, *Bovo*, and *Lancelot*), were compiled for their instruction and entertainment.

The minor nobility and *Šlachta* (gentry) lived closer to the land on their estates, which they husbanded with the labour of the local farming population bound to socage or feudal service. They lived in timber-framed manors or farmhouses, embellished with finely tiled stoves and provincial-style furniture. In dress and personal adornment they differed little from the wealthier small-holder or tenant farmers, the men wearing fur-trimmed overcoats and ornamental sash-girdles (*pajasy*), sometimes of richly woven brocade. The less affluent made do with leather boots and



a sword - and if needs must, even a single boot. Their right to bear arms, however, remained uncontested even under foreign occupation, and the strangely beautiful ciphers of Belarusan Heraldry are a unique feature of the law of arms in Eastern Europe.

The Russian occupation had a highly adverse effect on the living conditions of the rural classes in Belaruś. Previously under the Grand Dukes, as Kastuś Kalinoŭski wrote in 1862: "some defended the homeland by continually going to war, while others tilled, sowed, reaped and harvested. This is how the corvee came into being... Now the Muscovite began to introduce his rule into our land and said: 'Peasant, give me recruits. Peasant, give me taxes. And on top of that, perform corvee or pay quitrent to the state treasury!'...Now that's justice for you!" From these oppressive times dates the popularised, but partly misleading image of a backward, ground-down peasant nation, scraping a wretched living from the soil and bringing up families of starving children in "thousands of miserable huts with small dusty windows and rotten thatch roofs". By no means did all countryfolk live in such primitive impoverishment; the ornamental linen chests of the peasantry from 19th. century Belaruś show forth a wealth of delicately woven and richly-embroidered finery to equal any from the rich plains of Hungary or Bohemia, and put to shame the wardrobe of an affluent Welsh hill-farmer. Varieties of headscarves, coifs, blouses, shirts, stylish pleated jackets and straw or fur hats were as diversified as the Belarusan dialects from Belastok to Smalensk, and from Pinsk to Vialiki Luki. Folksongs recall the peasant's "little silver goblet with the golden rim" from which he would cheer himself with a draught of fine home-distilled wheat or rye spirit and honey liqueur (*krupnik*). Furnished though the average Belarusan cottage may have been with utilitarian benches, tables, and simple pallet-beds, (as in rural Brittany or colonial America, smaller domestic animals wandered in and out of the cottages almost as household pets), it would on appropriate occasion be ablaze with icon-lamps, mountainous piles of cross-stitch cushions and flower-embroidered wall-hangings, almost rivalling a nobleman's parlour in colourful splendour, and displaying the talents and industry of the household.

A system of unified Laws governing persons and property in relation to the aristocracy was for centuries, prior to Tsarist occupation, set out in the *Statute of Lithuania* as codified in the Belarusan language (1588) by the great Chancellor of the Grand Duchy, Leú Sapieha (1557-1633). The Statute also defined certain rights of the merchant and peasant classes, though the former were generally subject to their municipal *Magdeburg Privileges*. The latter, by reason of differences of regional



usage across the Grand Duchy, were subject to local custom as interpreted by the rural courts (*Kopny sud*). The workings of these courts are amusingly portrayed in Vincenty Dunin-Marcynkievič's comedy *Pinskaja Šlachta* ("The gentry of Pinsk") written in 1866. Even Imperial Russian statutes did not seek to displace the ancient Belarusan customary law. Tsar or no Tsar, at family level the ordering of the peasant household, the arrangement of marriages, and the partition of the family property were a matter for the head of the family (*haspadar*), generally the natural father, but after his death by a son or other person designated by unanimous consent, subject always to the control of the *Kopny sud*.

The place of the ancestor cult (*Dziady*) was a feature of family life more consistently observed in Belarus than in other Slavic lands. The protection of the home and boundaries of the family farm were entrusted to the family *čur* or "home spirit". The father acted with the family not only as ruler, but also as priest in invoking the spirits of ancestors, and saving food for them on solemn occasions, principally on the annual feast of *Dziady* in late October. It is significant that the active protest movement against the Bolshevik establishment in Belarus began in Minsk with a march to the graves of the victims of Kurapaty, and an unofficial pilgrimage to the site on 30th October 1988 to commemorate the ancestral feast of *Dziady*.

Particularly rich are Belarusan **Mythology** and legends combining proto-Slavic and Baltic traditions, in which the figures of the sky-God *Bielboh-Bialun*, and his three sons *Piarun* - the god of war, *Ziuzia* - the god of winter and *Čarnaboh* - the god of evil, fulfil the central role. *Piarun*'s wife *Žyva-Hramavica*, the summer goddess of fertility, conceived a child, the sun-god *Dažboh*, to check the power of the winter-god *Ziuzia*. To escape the evil forces of *Ziuzia*, *Žyva* changed herself into a white she-goat and hid in a bed of willows, where she gave birth to *Dažboh*. This legend survives in the Christmas procession of carol-singers in Belarus, where a maquette of a white goat is still carried to represent the hidden birth of the mythological sun-god. In turn *Dažboh* married the goddess of Spring - *Lada*, by whom he had a son *Jaryla*, the god of growth and of love. His descent on earth at the command of his mother *Lada*, heralded the beginning of spring. Other divinities include the moon-god and guardian of live-stock *Volas*, the mid-summer god *Kupala*, the god of fire - *Svaroh*, *Pahoda* - the goddess of fair weather, *Pasvist* - the god of clouds and bad weather, *Palandra* the god of fever, *Marana* - the goddess of death, and *Rada* - the goddess of intelligence and good counsel. Added to these was a near-Hibernian



plethora of pixies elves and goblins - *Chatnik*: the household sprite, *Chleúnik*: the cattle harrier, *Dziedzia*: the fire fairy, *Kon* the seer, *Lasuny* the forest elves, *Kaduk* the bringer of accidents, *Kopsa* the graveyard elf, *Dziedzia* the fire sprite, *Mara* an evil Will-o-the-wisp, *Pierapaloh* the spirit of fright, and *Zmora* the nightmare goblin. Other malicious sprites included the *Vadzianicy-kupalki*, *načnicy*, *pakutniki*, *visielniki*, *vaúkalaki* and *vupyry*. A number of poets - Kazimier Svajak (1890-1926) and Zmitrok Biadula (1886-1941) in particular - have touched upon the subject, but the Belarusan mythological tradition has yet to be forged into a unified cycle, in the pattern of the Teutonic *Nibelungenlied*, the Scandinavian *Edda* and the Finnish *Kalevala*. In time, no doubt, the national epic will emerge as a challenge for a new generation of poets.

Ancient rituals and Customs have always played an important part in Belarusan rural life, and the processions of *kaladoúščyki* (carol singers) at Christmas and New Year (*Kalada*) with the image or guise of a goat, and the lighting of bonfires, and weaving of floral coronets by young girls to float downstream, illuminated with small candles on Midsummer night (*Kupala*), were eagerly revived by young people during the 1970s and 1980s, in an endeavour to reassert their national identity. The ceremonies to commemorate dead ancestors at *Dziady* led to a search for the tombs of the heroes of the 1863 Uprising, and later in the 1980s to the mass demonstrations at the Bolshevik killing fields at Kurapaty, where the flower of the Belarusan intelligentsia was murdered between 1937 and 1941. *Dažynki* is another popular summer festival marking the harvest home, when the last sheaf of grain decorated with flowers and ribbons, is brought back from the fields in solemn procession to the sound of singing and dancing. On occasion, these festivals are celebrated in the Minsk area, in particular in the picturesque "Skansen" village of Stročyce\* on Ptyč lake, some 15 km. to the south-west of the city.

The geographical disposition of a country appears to condition national characteristics. From a central plateau, and through encircling uplands, the rivers of Belaruś flow down to the Baltic and to the Black Sea, making it an important trade forum in Eastern Europe. Here from the Middle-ages onwards Hanseatic armourers, Dutch herring-salters, Muscovite trappers, Jewish financiers, Hungarian wine-merchants, Turkish spicers, Tatar tanners and Chinese silkmen came to trade, buying in exchange furs, dried fish, salt, linen, sailcloth, ropes, timber, tar, spirits and foodstuffs, thereby laying the foundations of future Belarusan prosperity. These international contacts appear over the centuries to have engendered the most distinctive features of the Belarusan **National Character** - tolerance and hospitality. Minsk, like many other Belarusan cit-



ies had Greek and Latin churches, as well as German *kirchen*, Tatar mosques, Jewish synagogues and Old Believer chapels for Muscovite refugees. As an old Orthodox petitioner wrote in 1614: "We believe in the sacraments of the the Roman Church as we do in those of our Greek *carkva*; we have always held the Catholics to be our brothers, and God forbid we should ever hold them to be heretics". The engaging Calvinist diarist Todar Jeulašeuski (1546-1604) seems to epitomise this tolerance when he wrote of the Roman Pope: "May God grant even now the return of gentler times, that all Christians - who, even though they differ in some articles of faith, are Christians nevertheless, - show greater respect for the supreme and greatest Christian monarch the Pope; and may he like a wise and kind father, love and suffer them all, in the likeness of the father of a family who knows and suffers all his sons, even if they differ from him and the other brothers in their opinions". Such attitudes were abhorrent to Russians like Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow (1560c-1633), who wrote that he could not conceive how such families in the Grand Duchy could even sit at the same table, let alone pray together.

With this quality of tolerance goes a certain "please yourself" approach; better to part company without fuss, than to quarrel. Not that the Belarusans are faint-hearted when called upon to defend their freedom and their native land; few nations have been more fired over the centuries by deeds of chivalry, or by patriotic songs and verse than they.

The Belarusan is generally intelligent, tactful, imaginative and hardworking. In company he is hospitable, convivial and a humourist even in adversity. As with mysticism and cuisine, Litvak-Jewish and Belarusan humour flourished in the same soil: "Why should I not sing?/ why should I not play,/ when in my small cottage / all is fine and gay ? Why should I not sing? why should I not play? / Flies against the window-pane / loudly buzz all day. / Why should I not sing?/ why should I not play?/ Baby in the cradle / bawls the hours away. / Why should I not sing ? / why should I not play ?/ Yonder howling watchdog / I would gladly flay..." The catalogue of wry domestic complaints goes on, and could be sung equally well by a harrassed Christian Rahnieda or Jewish Rivka.

A land of lakes, rivers, forests and marshes, Belaruś is veiled in a slightly sparkling mist which has been likened to that of the Celtic lands. In general the Belarusans, like their revered Renaissance scholar Francis Skaryna (1485-1545c.), are fond of proverbs, riddles, multiple or hidden meanings in words, marvellous tales of miraculous icons, of angels, ghosts and goblins, a wisp of astrology, prediction and herbal medecine.



knight-errantry and strange other-worldly songs. These propensities, together with their self-effacing manner and deeply individualistic idealism, have led them to be called after Tolkien, and perhaps not inaptly, the *hobbits* of Eastern Europe.

It has also been noted that Belaruś and Ireland have much in common, beyond their reliance on the common potato in hard times. The same might be said of the growth and development of Dublin and Minsk. Neither city was the historic capital of its country, and both were largely built by what the Galway Bay song tactfully calls "strangers". Much of the original architecture was obliterated under colonial rule, and both cities were then endowed with an impressive range of elegant if somewhat impersonal neo-classical buildings - Law Courts, Government Offices, City halls, Castle-prisons and the like - which are normally found embellishing vice-regal capitals. It is questionable whether the Belarusans, or the Irish from beyond the Pale, would of themselves have set up anything as majestic as *Plac Pieramohi* or O'Connell Street. What ultimately gave the two cities their distinctive historic flavour was of course the people, and their national arts of hospitality and convivial conversation. However, the end result is that, on achieving independence, both countries found themselves the heirs of handsomely built capital cities of European status, left to them by their former rulers. In a sense Minsk can be called the Dublin of Eastern Europe, with no discredit to either city.

The Belarusan Language belongs, together with Ukrainian and Russian, to the Eastern Slavic group of which it was for many centuries the most advanced literary form. The Franciscan traveller, William of Ruysbroek noted already in 1252 that even by the shores of the Black Sea "there are forty small towns, practically each one of them having its own dialect". It is distinguished from the other two languages by a number of important grammatical and vocabular differences, and by morphological features such as *akannie*, - "a" instead of an unaccented "o", *dziekannie* - "dz" instead of "d", and *cekannie* - "ć" or 'ts' instead of "t". By way of simple example the Belarusan says *dziakuju* ("Thanks") where the Russian says *spasibo*, or the Pole *dziakuje*. *Kali laska* (Bel. "Please") becomes *po-žalujsta* (Russ.) or *prosimy* (Pol.); *šmat* (Bel. "Many"), becomes *mnogo* (Russ.), or *dużo* (Pol.). Unlike the Russians and the Ukrainians, the Belorussans have over the centuries commonly used both the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabets, thus stressing their stronger cultural links with Western Europe. The Belarusan letter "w" introduced in the mid-19th century, is specific to that language, and is used neither by Russians nor by Ukrainians.



Among the early monuments of Belarusan **Literature** are the ever-popular *Prayers* and *Sermons* of St. Cyril of Turaú (c.1130-1182), a number of interesting 15th c. historical Chronicles (*Smalensk, Chronicle of the Grand Dukes*) and Arthurian Romances from the late Middle Ages, in particular *Bevis*, *Lancelot* and the unique legend of *Tristan* with its evocative descriptions: "The king entered the tent and found the ladies playing chess with figures of very beautiful crystal... Tristan came out in full armour, and on his helmet was a crown of most lovely flowers." The Renaissance scholar and mystic Francis Skaryna (c.1485-c. 1545) was the author of a number of philosophical, and occasionally arcane *Prefaces* to his translation of the Bible - "A psalm, he writes, is a song of angels and spiritual incense, bringing with its music both joy to the body and enlightenment to the soul." He was also the author of *Irmosy* (Hymns), poetic prayers, and the first examples of rhymed verse in Middle-Belarusan. Much of his work is tinged with the mystique of the Christian *Cabala*. The *Memoirs* of Todar Eúlašéúski (1546-1604) meander through entertaining accounts of storms, murders, apparitions and Court gossip. The religious dissensions of the times provided a stimulus to polemicists such as Symon Budny (1530-1593) and Vasil Ciapinski (c.1530-c.1603), who lamented the nobility "neglecting and even despising their glorious native language", whilst the verse of Andrej Rymša (c.1585) was more concerned with esoteric heraldic themes than with lyrical or polemical effusions.

In the 17th century L. Karpovič (1580-1620) and M. Smatrycki, I. Paciej, S. Zizanij (fl.1600) and Simeon of Polack (1629-1680) continued in the polemical tradition, but the secular oratory of Kamuniaka's *Letter to Abuchovič* (c. 1628), or the *Speech* of Mialeška make more colourful and lively reading, with their biting satire and nostalgic praise of by-gone days: "As for [*Grand Duke*] Žyhymunt the First, sweet is his memory, for he detested the Germans like dogs, and he hated the Poles with their cunning, but dearly loved Litva and our [*Bela-*] Ruś". The 18th century was a period of continuing decline, with the Belarusan language receding before Polish and later, Russian. Nevertheless anonymous nativity plays and school dramas or interludes, and satirical monologues in the national language, or mixed Belarusan and Polish, such as *Matthew and the Quack-doctor* and Kajetan Marašeúski's *Kamedyja* (1787), continued to be performed; and many attractive folksongs dating from this period were collected by 19th century ethnographers such as Jan Čačot, Alexandar Rypinski, E. Ramanaú and P. Šejn. The colourful folk burlesque *Taras on Parnassus* (1837) enjoys the status of a classic. The works of the blacksmith Paúluk Bahrym (fl. 1828) are mostly



lost, but Vincent Dunin Marcinkievič (1807-1884), for many years a resident of Minsk, left poems and dramas giving a vivid and idyllic picture of Belarusian rural life (*Hapon, The Gentry of Pinsk*). The nationalist leader of the 1863 Uprising, Kastuś Kalinoŭski (1838-1864) in his spirited political writings (*Peasant Truth*), and the poet Francišak Bahuševič (1840-1900) in his verse-collections (*A Belarusian pipe, A Belarusian bow*), took up the theme of national patriotism and social justice for the oppressed Belarusian people. They became, with I. Nasovič (1788-1877), the compiler of the first Belarusian Dictionary (*Slovar Belarusskaha Narečija* [1870]), and a group of late 19th century ethnographers E. Ramanaŭ, P. Šejn, M. Nikifarouŭski and Ul. Dabravolski, the heralds of the national Renaissance.

The appearance of the first Belarusian newspaper and literary journal *Naša Niva* ("Our Cornfield") after many decades of prohibition, made it the forum of a number of young writers, whose works now rank as the classics of Belarusian literature. With the "Naša Niva era" (1906-1914) are associated the names of the scholars who edited the publication - Alexei Ūlasaŭ (1874-1941), Ivan Luckievič (1881-1919) and his brother Anton (1884-1946), also known as Anton Navina. Among the major contributors was the Minsk-born Maxim Bahdanovič (1891-1920), - "a poet of fine sensibility and unmatched technical mastery", the gifted lyricists Aleś Harun (1887-1920) and Zmitrok Biadula (1886-1941), together with the foremost poets of the age Jakub Kolas (1882-1956) and Janka Kupala (1882-1942). The spirit of the movement was captured in Harun's poem *Song-Bell*: "Ah, my native speech, my mother, / Ah word, thou great bell, ringing ever, / Booming mighty, / gleaming brightly, / From gold cast and / Forged from argent, / Thunder on, thou, / Thunder on!"

The title of 'Bell-ringer' of the national revival is traditionally bestowed on Janka Kupala, whose songs of social protest and national assertiveness were a feature of the revolutionary scene - *Say, who goes there? Belarusians!*, *The Gravemound*, and *The free wind has sung free songs*. Yet his most attractive works are his delicate and reflective lyrics such as *When woodlands gleamed* and *Summer*. "I will wander down my garden, / on the garden's quieter side, / there I'll wonder at the marvels / that beset me near and wide, / now that summer sings its lovesong, / shedding light on hill and vale, / And a holy fire is kindled in the heart." Jakub Kolas, on the other hand remains the undisputed master of the Belarusian epic, of which the land and its life, so lovingly described in his two masterpieces - *Simon the Musician* and *The New Land*, - is ultimately the hero: "From the soil of our home-land / From pine-woods murmuring / From tales of evening, / From minstrels sing-



ing./ From children's open faces, (their lives in darkness led). / From night's whispered tread, / From the thousandfold threads / Which are webbed, which are woven to fabrics of life, / In which non-being and being unite, / Treasure had gathered, a torrent unending, / Singing to me, like a cornflower shimmering bright, / Seeking a way for flight, / Print of our country's life, / Imaged in words and in free streams of song." (*Simon the Musician*, tr. Vera Rich). His lyrics and short stories are also widely admired.

Some excellent religious verse was published during this period by a group of Belarusian-speaking Catholic priests - A. Ziazula, K. Svajak and V. Advažny.

It is fortunate indeed that the finest works of these poets were composed before Belaruś, after all too brief an interlude of freedom in 1918, was subjected to one of the most repressive periods of her history, in which the free growth of literature was stunted and deformed by the dictates of a restrictive totalitarian regime. Although in the first decade of Soviet rule a few semi-official literary clubs, such as *Polymia*, *Uzvyšša* and *Maladniak*, attracted a number of poets of high standing - Ciška Hartny, Čarot, Krapiva, Hlebka, Čorny and Lužanin, many fine poets and writers were tempted, during the repressions of the 1930s, to echo Ūl. Dubouka's lines: "They have terrorised me so for deviations / Of a petty bourgeois origin / That I have almost no strength / To put in verse the present day." The War period and the following years produced little of any great interest, though the death of Stalin enabled the older generation of writers - Janka Bryl' (b.1917), Ivan Šamiakin (b.1921) and Ivan Mielež (1921-1976) - to make up for some of the lost time. Some talented writers such as N. Arsennieva (b. 1903), authoress of many patriotic poems, and Sakrat Janovič (b. 1936), were able to work abroad, free of official constraints.

Among more recent writers of distinction are the novelists Vasil Bykaú (b.1924), Ūl.Karatkievič (b.1939), and the poets Maxim Tank (b.1912), Nil Hilevič (b.1931) and Pimen Pančenka(b.1917).

The 1980s witnessed the emergence of a school of talented and more liberated authors, and with Independence it is anticipated that Belarusian letters will revert to the mainstream of modern European Literature. Already a new generation of talented young writers are striking out into new fields: Ūl. Rubanaú (b.1952), Ūl. Arlou (b.1953), a follower of Karatkievič in historical novels, Aleś Astašonak (b.1954), Adam Hlobus (b.1958), Anatol Kazlou (b.1962), Chryscina Laľko (b. 1962) on ecological themes, Anatol Sys, and Andrej Fedarenka (b.1964).

Formal literature may have developed late in Belaruś, but its Mu-



sic, whether religious or secular, is both rich and varied. Choral singing lies at the root of the Belarusan musical tradition, and is a form in which - whether in the fields, in church or at the opera, - the Belarusans excel. The Belarusan soprano voice has a captivating, superbly silky quality unequalled among the eastern Slavs, even as Ukrainian tenors and Russian basses are unsurpassed in their own field. Many Belarusan folk-songs relate to the coming of spring, to sowing, Lent, Pentecost or Green-week, Mid-summer day and Harvest-time, ancestor commemoration, Yuletide, marriage and funerals. Such songs often date back to pagan beliefs and practices, such as fire-worship, ritual bathing, dabbling in the dew and bringing in the May. Not surprisingly these traditions extended also to Christian festivals, holidays and ceremonies, giving rise to a corpus of simple, as well as sophisticated religious folk-hymns, passed on orally or recorded in manuscript *Bahahlasniki* (Hymn Books). Similar folk influences affected the liturgical chants brought from Constantinople by Greek missionaries in the 10th century, and the old neumatic or *znamenny* chant soon developed its own Belarusan characteristics, as noted down in a few surviving manuscript collections of which Bohdan Anisimovič's *Suprasl Irmalogion* (1598-1601) is perhaps the most striking. In much the same way Latin and Greek influences commingled to produce a baroque-style polyphonic music, which from the cathedrals and monasteries of Vilnia, Žyrovicy, Minsk and Viciebsk, eventually reached Moscow, where it profoundly changed the evolution of Russian Church music. The 16th and 17th centuries were the great era of Belarusan liturgical chant, and some 50 manuscript *Irmologia* have survived, compiled by Todar Siemianovič of Supraśl (1638), Cimaŋiej Kulikovič of Biely Kovieli (1652), Parchomy Pacienka of Slucak (1669), Antoni Kišyć of Suprasl (1674), Kyril Ilyjnski of Davyd Haradok (1713) and the monk Tarasij of Minsk (1750) among many others. Valuable collections of hymns or (*kantyčki*) known as *Bahahlasniki*, mostly in manuscript, were compiled in the 17th and 18th centuries, though a printed collection in Belarusan *Kantyčka* - was first produced at the Jesuit College in Polack (1778). Many of these were subsequently destroyed on the orders of the Russian Tsar after 1839, along with thousands of priceless traditional *Irmalohia* and other service books.

Western-style music, both liturgical and secular flourished in Vilnia, where the English envoy Sir Jerome Horsey (c.1580) noted "a very large room where organs and singing was... trumpets sounded and kettledrums roared, loud instruments and soft played very musically", and also in Minsk where the Russian diarist P. Tolstoy was much impressed by the organ music, particularly in the Dominican Church (1697).



Manuscript collection of 16th and 17th century songs, airs and dances - the *Vilenski* and *Polacki Ščytki* - are representative of the type of renaissance music performed at entertainments in the palaces and castles of the nobility. The Court of the Princes Radzivil at Niasviž became an important centre of religious and secular music in the 18th century, of which a number of examples have been only published recently, including works by M. Radzivil (1749-1800), T. Kašciuška, I. Holand (fl. 1785), an anonymous *Mass in A major* and a *Requiem in B*. Another magnate, the Grand Hetman of Lithuania and Belaruś, Prince Michal Kazimir Ahinski (1730-1800) was a distinguished music lover and composer whose court in Slonim, endowed with an orchestra (1765), a theatre (1771) and even an opera company, was known in Western Europe as the *Musenhof* ("Palace of the Muses").

Even in an age of national suppression, folklore flourished and was enriched by popular romances such as *Što za miesiac* ("What a moon"), which owe much to the art music of the late 18th and early 19th centuries; the Belarusan composer and pianist Anton Abramovič (1811-1854) wrote a number of popular suites of folk-tunes, as well as romances to the Belarusan words of A. Barščeúski such as *Dzievanka* and *Harelica*. A few folk-tunes from the Polack region were published by the German Christian Schlegel in c.1780. A sorry symptom of the national decline of Belaruś under Tsarist rule was the fate of two of its most brilliant operatic composers *Michal Hlinka* [Glinka] (1804-1857) of Smalensk, and *Stanislaú Maniuška* [Moniuszko] (1819-1872) of the Minsk region, both of whom lived and worked abroad. The first, author of an orchestral *Fantasia* on the Belarusan folk-tune *Kamarinskaja* ("*Balić maja halovanka*") and other similar works, has become known as the "Father of Russian music"; the second, who composed the music for the first Belarusan opera "*Sialanka*" (1852), is today hailed as the "greatest Polish composer of the 19th century after Chopin".

Important collections of folk-music were produced by the 19th. century school of Belarusan ethnographers such as P. Šejn (1886), A Černy (1894), and A. Hurynovič (1893), followed by Úl. Terraúski (1921), and M. Ravienski (1921), not simply as ethnographical material, but as works arranged and intended for concert performance. Folk musical research was later continued by choral musicians, in particular by H. Šyrma (1892-1978), and V. Roúda (b.1921). Much of their ethnographical work was done in Minsk, and still continues at the Institute of Philology, Ethnography and Folklore of the Academy of Sciences, with the publication of a monumental collection of over 42 volumes of folk-songs, music and poems.



Early Belarusan composers of polyphonic Church music of both Greek and Latin rite include M. Hlinka (*Liturgical chants*), S. Maniuška (*Mass* c.1854), M. Ancaú (*Holy Liturgy* 1902\*), A. Turankaú (*Liturgical anthems* 1913-1917\*), M. Ravienski (*Holy Liturgy* 1943), K. Halkoúski (*Hymns* 1920-1939), A. Valynčyk (*Liturgical anthems* 1930s\*), M. Kulikovič-Ščahloú (*Holy Liturgy, All-night Vigil* 1947-1948; *Liturgical anthems* 1952-1969\*\*). Many of these composers also wrote secular and instrumental music.

Among the leading classical composers of orchestral and chamber music during the present century have been M. Čurkin (*Simfonieta* 1925); A. Cichocki (*Six symphonies* 1927-1948; *Concerto for trombone* 1934); M. Aladaú (*Piano quintet* 1925; *Ten symphonies* 1921-1971), M. Kulikovič-Ščahloú (*Two symphonies, Two symphonic Suites, a Piano Concerto* 1928-1941, and *Suites for piano* 1939-1969); A. Bahatyroú (*Two symphonies* 1946-1947, *Concerto for cello* 1962, *Concerto for Double Bass* 1964 \*); L. Abeliovič (*Four symphonies, a Piano Concerto, chamber music and a sonata*); A. Mdivani (*Symphony in the baroque style, Miniatures for Belarusan folk instruments, Cello Concerto* 1969-1980) and the Minsk-born D. Smolski (*Four symphonies* 1961-1986, *Chamber music* 1961-1983, *Three Concerti for dulcimer and folk orchestra* 1961-1983, *Piano Concerto* 1975, *Violin Concerto* 1972).

Vocal music has traditionally been to the forefront in Belaruś, with Chorales and Operatic works holding pride of place. Unfortunately, because of its powerful visual and aural impact, opera became the prime target for Bolshevik propagandists, and the compulsion to produce dreary *Proletkult* works to warped librettos was a cross composers such as Ancaú, Turankaú and Kulikovič-Ščahloú, and no doubt many others, found hard to bear. Among the foremost operatic and choral composers this century have been M. Ancaú (*Requiem*), M. Ravienski (*Hapon* 1921, *Branislaú* 1930) N. Aladaú (*Taras on Parnassus* 1927), A. Turankaú (*The Flower of Delight* 1940\*), A. Bahatyroú (*In the Wilderness of Palessie* 1939, *Cantata "Belaruś"* 1949, Part songs: *My silver goblet*\*, *Sleep all ye*\*\*), M. Kulikovič-Ščahloú (*Kaciaryna* 1940, *The Forest lake* 1943\*, *Usiaslaú the Enchanter* 1944\*\*, Part songs *Summer*\*\*, *Certainty* \* and other *lyrical chorales* 1955), D. Smolski (*The azure legend* 1978, *Francisk Skaryna* 1980), and L. Zachleúny (*Coronet Cantata* 1972, Part song: *Said the rye in the wide field*).

Other well-known composers of the older generation include I. Luban, H. Pukst, D. Lukas, I. Lučanok - author of a popular version of Kolas words *Moj rodny kut* \* ("My native heath"), - Ul. Aloúnikaú, and the Smalensk born E. Hlebaú. A new generation of composers, emanci-



pated from stifling censorship, is seeking inspiration in themes from the colourful historical past of Belaruś, and adventurous works have been produced by A. Bandarenka (*The Prince of Navahradak* 1987), A. Licvinoŭski (*Francisco Misterioso* 1989), and Ja. Paplaŭski (*Choral Symphony 'Lux aeterna' \** 1989).

Folk instrumentalists have also played a significant role in promoting an authentic image of Belarusan music. The first appearance of Belaruś, on the world stage at the International Music Festival at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1927, was as a partnership between the great Belarusan soprano Larysa Alexandroŭskaja, with the distinguished Minsk instrumentalist Stanislaŭ Navicki (1899-1972), a master of the Belarusan *cymbaly* (dulcimer). His near contemporary Ja. Źynovič (1907-1974) was an accomplished player of equal, if not greater eminence; both artists were natives of the Minsk district.. Among the classical composers, the versatile Belarusan-American M. Kulikovič-Sčahloŭ produced a collection of 60 arrangements of *Belarusan songs and dances* (Cleveland, 1967) for accordeon. It might here be mentioned that the great American classical composer Aharon Kaplan *alias* Aaron Copland (1900), author of the trio *Viciebsk*, was of Belarusan-Jewish descent from that city, and that Israel Baline *alias* Irving Berlin (b. 1888), composer of *God Bless America* and the musical *Annie, get your gun*, was born into a family from Mahiloŭ.

Folk ensembles usually comprise from two to four instruments: a bagpipe and fiddle; a fiddle and triangle; a fiddle and cello; or three fiddles. Other combinations included: two fiddles; a fiddle and a dulcimer (*cymbaly*)\*; a fiddle and a drum; a fiddle and an accordeon; a fiddle and a clarinet; an accordeon and a dulcimer; or a foursome - a dulcimer, an accordeon, a fiddle and a drum\*\*. In the western provinces and in the Minsk district, a full folk orchestra or instrumental ensemble would include: fiddles, an accordeon, a lute or guitar, a clarinet, a drum and a tambourine; or fiddles, dulcimers, clarinet, accordeon and drum. A folk orchestra might also be made up of brass instruments. In the past, many of the best performers of folk-music were Jewish. Small folk-groups occasionally meet up and entertain visitors in the "Left Bank" cafes and taverns of Trinity suburb.

Despite having suffered, like Germany, Denmark and Hungary, from a period of wars and decline in the 17th and 18th centuries, Belarusan culture has made a significant contribution to the visual arts of Europe. Belarusan **Architecture**, although attractive and highly individualistic, is unfortunately little in evidence after centuries of wars and foreign adulteration, with Poles and Russians each vying to impose



their own architectural norms on the country. Traditional Byzantine renaissance saucer domes were replaced in the 19th century by the "Orthodox" onion domes, whereas the *polskaść* (Polish trend) of the Latin church remained espoused to a form of red-brick, step-gabled Prussian Gothic. A similar trend was discernible in Alsace and Lorraine - another 'intermediate' land - during the 18th and 19th centuries, of which the Prussian-style railway precinct in Metz is an eloquent symbol, with French and Germans competing to impose their mark on the city and landscape.

It must be recalled however that, prior to the 17th century, the principal building material in Belaruś was timber. Castles, cities, town and country houses, Cathedrals, churches, warehouses, mills and cottages were built almost entirely of wood, wattle and daub. Fire and natural decay destroyed buildings, sometimes ancient, which were then rebuilt in the style of a different age. This basic fact accounts for the relative paucity of examples of early architecture, not simply in Belaruś, but in Finland and throughout Scandinavia, Poland, the Carpathian lands and Russia; though in the drier climates of Southern Europe where timber is more expensive, stone was widely used. However, old engravings, drawings and paintings have preserved the forms of wooden architecture in Belaruś, particularly in Palessie, and from these and other surviving examples it can be seen that traditional stone buildings perpetrated architectural forms deriving from wood-construction.

Sufficient stone or brick-built monuments remain, however, to show that a distinctive Belarusan style existed from the 12th and 13th centuries onwards. Of the early churches, *St Euphrosyne* in Polacak and the *Kaložža* church in Horadnia are the outstanding examples, though both are in a bad state of disrepair. A number of late mediaeval and early Renaissance churches display a peculiar blend of Byzantino-Gothic styles, which are characteristic of the national style, largely influenced by traditional wooden architecture. The dominant feature is a central cupola or steeple and a single or two bell-towers at the west end; clusters of more than three domes are unusual and the pattern of a central dome with four smaller domes (the so-called "hen-and-four-chicks" style) generally date from the period of Russian rule. Belarusan Churches were rectangular or cruciform, generally elongated in form, rather than the compact square favoured by the Russians. A number of churches and secular buildings have survived, particularly in Western Belaruś, which stress the distinctiveness of the Belarusan architectural style, and of this the venerable *Church of SS. Peter and Paul* \*(1613) in the Lower Town in Minsk is the only surviving example in the capital.



Of early Byzantino-Gothic churches, the pitch-roofed Church of *Synkovičy* (late 15th century) with its four corner turrets and gable ends with tiers of blind arches and rounded lancet windows is the earliest. Of similar style are the Churches of *Iškaldz* without turrets, the Church of *Malamažajsk\*\*\** with its magnificently gabled west-end, white-stucco double blind arches and spectacular north and south façades and windows, the SS. Barys and Hleb Church of *Navahrudak*, the Church of *Hniezna* with its single octagonal tower, low spire and buttresses, the square towered Church of SS. Peter and Paul at *Svieržen* and the most impressively original Church of the Annunciation at *Suprasl* with its Serbian frescoes, all dating from the 16th century. Neither did Protestant groups depart from the national style, as the fine renaissance Churches of *Smarhoni\*\**, *Nový Svieržan* and *Zaslaúje* outside Minsk demonstrate; these buildings are all eloquent reminders that the Byzantino-Gothic style transcended the religious rivalry between Greece and Rome, and had blended into a uniquely visible symbol of Belarusan architectural homogeneity.

The same tradition prevailed in secular architecture. The great red-brick fortified towers of *Kameniec*, *Navahrudak* and *Lida* (13th and 14th centuries), the massive 16th century fortress of *Mir\*\*\** with its tiered and spired towers of blind arches and white round-arched windows, the contemporary castle tower in *Niasviž\*\*\** (16th century), and the turreted fortified manor of *Hajciuniški\*\** belong to the tradition of *Malamažajsk* and *Smarhoni*. Later, Italian and Dutch renaissance influences began to make themselves felt, with concave and convex buttressed gables, classical triangular pediments, columns and cupolas. One of the most interesting examples of the transition from the Byzantino-Gothic to the Italianate renaissance style is the church of *St. Nicholas\*\** in Mahiloú, at present disfigured by the accretion of an out-of-proportion onion dome. Few examples of these attractive old forms subsist in Minsk, though old drawings show that the Bernardine monastery church of *St. Joseph* to have been built in the Dutch renaissance style, and the restored *SS Peter and Paul* Church (1613) in the Lower town, with its blind arches retains a few Byzantino-Gothic features. The Baltic concave, scroll-buttressed gables of the restored *Basilian convent* of the Holy Ghost, and the postiche *Piščali Fortress* (1825) in vul. Lošyca (*Valadarskaja*) also provide a visual link with this earlier tradition. Some ninety towns and castles in Belaruś were captured by Tsar Alexis of Muscovy in 1654. The ruin of the cities was described by a visiting Orthodox Deacon, Paul of Aleppo: "All the men without exception they cut to pieces, not sparing one; the women and children they carried into



slavery after destroying their habitations, so as to leave their towns entirely desolate."

Much of Minsk and other cities was reconstructed in brick when peace returned, and many churches in the Belarusan style of baroque were built in the late 17th and throughout the eighteenth century. In or about Minsk, these included the present *Cathedral of the Holy Ghost* (1687, 1741), the Bernhardine monastic Church of *St. Joseph* (1642, 1740), the *Farny* Church in Zaslaúe and the *Franciscan church* at Ivaniec, amongst others too numerous to mention in Pinsk, Mahiloú, Horadnia, Niasviž and the monastic foundations at Žyravicy. The wealth of architectural form and detail in what has been called Uniate baroque - the Western style adapted to traditional Greek-rite taste and requirements as, for example, in the Church of the *Nativity of Our Lady* in Horadnia - has recently aroused interest and been acclaimed as a uniquely national style. Indeed these fine and often imaginative copper-domed white stucco churches, depicted in Napoleon Orda's lithographs, became very much an integral part of the Belarusan town and country scene. A relatively high proportion of highly original wooden churches have survived in Palessie and in the north east of Belaruś, following the traditional pattern of a central tower or dome with twin west front towers, or three consecutive towers, one at the west end, one over the centre of the nave and one over the chancel. Latin-rite churches tended to follow the basilica plan with two west front towers. Even Jewish synagogues and Tatar mosques, whether of wood or brick, until the late 19th century adopted the national style of architecture.

Of secular buildings in the 17th and 18th centuries, the most numerous to survive are town houses based on the design of the single or two-storied timber house with a centrally or asymmetrically placed entrance, a row of six, eight or even ten windows on each floor and possibly an attic window or two. In villages with roads, cottages tended to be placed narrow end on to the road, permitting the addition of sheds, barns and outhouses towards the back. In towns, however, as in Minsk from the end of the 17th century, brick-built houses as well as wooden houses were disposed full length onto the street. Annexes and outhouses, as well as outside staircases, were placed at the back in the form of a garden courtyard. Seldom was a house built with more than two floors before the end of the 19th century. This kind of arrangement enabled the householder in the event of a fire - and they occurred frequently in towns, - to evacuate his family and possessions out of the numerous street front windows, or by way of outside staircases with little risk of injury or damage. The incidence of wooden construction techniques on brick build-



ings can be observed in Minsk in the wood-frame houses of *Hrušaúka suburb* and in the stucco residences of *vul. Kajdanava* in the Upper Town.

The original wood-built *Vankovič mansion* in *vul. Valockaja (Internacyjanalnaja E.)* in Minsk shows how the central entrance of the more substantial cottage became a plain portico, then a more spacious colonnaded verandah and pediment as in the Tyženhauz residence at *Pastavy*, with side wings developing at a later date. Certainly the great mid-18th century palaces of the Radzivils in *Niasviž* (1748), Sapiehas in *Ružany* (1784), and the flamboyant palace, park and cathedral-like chapel in *Homiel* (1785) vie in splendour with some of the chateaux of France and Germany, whilst the elegant smaller mansions of *Hanuta*, *Dziatlava* and *Skoki*, so evocatively portrayed by Orda, somehow bring to mind the lake castles of southern Sweden.

Indeed at the end of the 18th century the designs of the Italian Palladio were in vogue from Prague to Dublin and from St. Petersburg to Sydney, giving rise to an elegant classical style, of which T. Kramer's designs for Minsk in the late *Louis XVI / Directoire* fashion are good examples. Unfortunately many of Kramer's best known works - the *Theatre*, on *vul. Daminikanskaja*, the City Guildhall, - were later demolished, and what little remains - the Merchants' *City Exchange* (c.1798) and the former *Basilian monastery* (1799) in Trinity suburb, were subsequently altered almost out of recognition. The *Vankovič Country residence* near the Botanical Gardens and the *Masonic Lodge* in *zav. Seminarski* are examples of the *Empire* style which vested the city with a certain staid, 'international' importance.

The 1831 uprising in Belaruś against the Tsar, and the growth of Russian nationalism as exemplified in Glinka's thematic opera *A Life for the Tsar* (1836), were to have an adverse effect in promoting an increasingly abrasive form of Russian repression. It was held that the Belarusans were in reality Russians who had lost their way. The old Greek Catholic church of Belaruś was definitively 'reunited' in 1839 to a Russian church of which it had never formed part, and increasing numbers of Roman Catholic clergy and landlords were expelled or expropriated. Former Catholic churches were taken over, and remodelled or put to secular use as archival store-houses. Kastuś Kalinoŭski's 1863 uprising occurred at a time when the rediscovered culture of old Muscovy was coming into fashion, and this resulted in further suppression of Belarusan individuality. Not only were many new churches built in what Belarusan architects call the 'pseudo-Russian' style, favoured by the repressive Governor Muraviev (*Muravioŭščyna*) and dedicated to the Russian warrior-saint Alexander Nevski; old renaissance style



churches were also remodelled *a la russe* with ill fitting, sometimes monstrous, out of character onion domes and iconostases, of which the unique 17th century *Church of St. Nicholas* in Mahiloú is a particularly striking example. In Minsk the fine old Orthodox church in the Lower Town was transmogrified in similar style, and the baroque *Farny Church* in nearby Zaslaúe was "topped" with an incongruous Bulgaro-Byzantine saucer dome. This pattern was repeated all over Belaruś. Neither was it restricted to the Russians. After the laying waste of Belaruś by Tsar Aliaksiej Michajlavič in the mid 17th century, the Poles had attempted to impose their own cultural orientation in the devastated "Eastern provinces". After the partition of the Commonwealth, they sought to stake out their territorial claims, using the local Catholic Church to dominate the silhouette of mushrooming Russian churches with equally conspicuous and inapposite Prussian twin-spired "pseudo-Gothic" places of worship. All too often these had nothing in common with either the Belarusan, or indeed the traditional Polish Gothic of Chelmníe, Brochowie or Krakow. Nevertheless a few quite attractive small neo-Gothic churches were erected in the Minsk area, in particular *Holy Trinity St Roch* on Golden Hill, and the Church at nearby *Raubičy*.

Similar trends towards Russo-Polish mediaevalism in the second part of the 19th century prevailed in the secular architecture of this period, of which the *Jubiliejny Dom BNR* on Skaryna Avenue is by contrast a very attractive, if not very authentic example. More typical were the neo-Gothic "Gentlemen's Club" in the poplar-lined vul. *Ska-baleúskaja* (*Žyrvonaarmejskaja*), a former not unpicturesque pseudo-Russian shop with *Kokoschnik*-arched windows in vul. *Niamiha* [*no longer extant*], and the *Railway Hospital* in vul. *Aútadoraúskaja* (1914). In practice most of the new building in Minsk during the 19th and early 20th century followed the general pattern of West European commercial and domestic architecture, retaining certain features and details derived from traditional woodframe techniques. Public buildings, such as the *Municipal Theatre* (1891) in Central Square Park, and the former *State Bank* (1881) in vul. *Padhornaja* (*Karla Marxa*) (now the Belarusan National Museum), were generally constructed in the neutral style of the Parisian *Ecole des Beaux Arts*.

After the 1905 Revolution, the arts in Belaruś were less bound by convention, and "Art nouveau", or *art modern* as it is known, became popular as a new means of expression. The Merchants *City Exchange* building on Cathedral Square was rather incongruously refurbished in this style; the *Eúropa Hotel* and the headquarters of the Libava-Romny Railway corporation in vul. *Mahazinaja* (*Kirava*) were fine examples;



only part of the latter has survived. The best *Art nouveau* buildings in Minsk are grouped on the north side of Independence Square, and comprise the somewhat austere *Church of SS Simeon and Helena*, two historic apartment blocks, one by the Belarusan architect S. Hajdukievič, the other by H. Haj, and a smaller residential dwelling-house in vul. Sviardlova.

Whatever tragic consequences the Bolshevik Revolution may have had for Belaruś, one thing has to be said: that the ideal of a New Society, calling for the construction of a new city to be its capital, inspired many gifted writers and artists to join wholeheartedly in this common endeavour. From 1926 to about 1956, with the exception of the War years, Minsk was opened up and rebuilt as a European capital, the present appearance of which has attracted considerable admiration, and is a tribute to the dedication of the planners and builders who created it.

The reconstruction falls roughly into a period of constructivism and a period of neo-classicism, the latter covering the years after 1946. The first period was dominated by I. Langbard (1882-1951), H. Laúrou (1896-1967) and A. Voinaú (b.1902), who participated in drawing up the overall plan and producing the ensembles of the *Dom Urada* (Government House), the *Academy of Sciences*, the *National Opera and Ballet*, the *Military Club*, and the *Belarusan National Library*, all of which owe more than a little to the Chicago school of Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. The second period, in which H. Zaborski (b.1909) and U. Karol (1912-1980) played a leading role, represents a return to traditional baroque and neoclassicism, perhaps in an endeavour to endow Minsk with a touch of the European grandeur that seemed to have passed the city by. Broad leafy avenues, parks and court-yard gardens, enclosed between impressive commercial and residential apartment blocks of even height, make Skaryna Avenue, *Victory Square*, the riverside ensemble of vul. Špitalnaja (*Kamunistyčnaja*) and the precincts of the *Academy of Sciences* showplaces of which the citizens of Minsk can be justly proud. It is however still a city of dreary and unimaginative street names, devoid of any originality or local colour; and a certain obsessive approach to public statues and monuments with a few exceptions, accentuate an unhappy disregard for the Belarusan national past.

Since the 1960s few buildings of note have been added to the city's skyline. Tower blocks have replaced historic old streets and fine old buildings, allowed to fall into disrepair, have been swept away. There are, however encouraging signs in the restoration of the old Trinity suburb, and plans have been drawn up to preserve and refurbish the whole of the Upper and Lower Towns.



Archeological surveys have produced evidence of forms of Sculpture in Minsk dating from the 11th century and crosses, medallions, and bronze bas-reliefs of saints excavated in the precincts of the Castle in the Lower town. A number of these are on display in the National Museum and the Historical Institute of the Academy of Sciences, including curious chessmen carved from bone. As a land of forests, wood-carving and architectural decorative ornamentation flourished in Belaruś during the Middle Ages. The Chronicles record the names of the 14th century sculptor *Master Ananias*, and a 15th century *Master Andrej* from Orša. The quality of their art can be seen in the wooden statues of their contemporaries at the *National Museum of Art* in Minsk - a 14th century *Christ on the Cross*, a masterly *Archangel Michael* \* (c.1475) in the Gothic style, a fine *Madonna and Child* \* (16th century) in the northern renaissance style, a bas relief pair of iconostasis *Royal Doors* (late 16th century) in the Byzantino-Gothic style, and magnificent *Royal Doors* (1669-1672) in the baroque style, intricately carved and gilded. Most of the 17th and 18th century sculptures on display are ecclesiastical, the Churches of Niasviž and Horadnia being decorated with a number of fine statues and busts. Little has been collected from the 19th and early 20th centuries. A school of sculpture was established at Vilnia University in 1832, where the artists R. Sliznia and V. Smakoŭski have left some proficient busts and *bas reliefs*.

Unquestionably the most significant event in the evolution of sculpture in modern Belaruś was the opening in 1898 of a *School of Art* by the painter and teacher Jury Pen (1854-1937), which became internationally famous as the Viciebsk School of Art, attended by Marc Chagall (1887-1985), the father of *Suprematism* - Kazimir Malevič (1878-1935), S. Judovin (1894-1954), and later by the masters of the socialist-romantic school of Belarusan sculpture Z. Azhur (b.1908), A. Hlebaŭ (1908-1968), S. Selichanaŭ (1917-1976) and A. Bembel. Associated with this spiritual ferment in his birthplace Viciebsk, and with his friend Chagall, was another sculptor of international stature and partly Scottish descent, Osip Zadkin (1890-1982), whose name needs no introduction: there is a Museum of his works in Paris.

Under the direction of the eminent M. Kerzin, the exponents of this school received numerous government commissions to adorn public buildings and places with statuary, expressing the idealism of the New Society. Azhur was unquestionably the most gifted of the group. His figurative style, which echoes the vigorous naturalism of Auguste Rodin, fills a notable gap in the evolution of Belarusan sculpture. With his classical portrayals of Belarusan and international cultural figures -



the patriotic leader *Kastus Kalinoŭski*, the writers *Jakub Kolas*, *Janka Kupala*, *F. Bahuševič*, *K. Bujlo*, *V. Volski*, *Maxim Harecki*, *Rabindranath Tagore*, the musicians *H. Šyrma*, *Larysa Alexandroŭskaja*, and other public figures, Azhur has made an important contribution to the prestige of Belarusian art. The same may be said of Hlebaŭ, whose best known work is his memorial in Polacak (1969) to the Renaissance scholar Francis Skaryna. An accomplished master of equestrian bronzes such as his *General Davatar*, he also left numerous portraits and statues of Kupala and other writers and artists of his era. Bembel, an able artist, is particularly at home with the *bas relief*, many of his imaginative hagiographical creations adorn the halls and corridors of Langbard's *Government house* and the *Military Club* in Minsk. He was not fortunate in the subject matter of his commissions, too many of which were politically tendentious and inclined to the melodramatic, of which his well-known bust of the defiant Soviet airman *Gastelo* and *The Guide* - both works are in the *National Museum of Art* - are fair examples. He appears at his best in the portraits of his son, or of more mundane sitters. Selichanaŭ appears to have received more than his fair share of political commissions, which he executed competently. Other well-known sculptors include A. Hrube (who left an interesting maquette for a statue depicting Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at the Yalta Conference in 1945), Adaškievič, Anikejčyk, Vakar, Zankovič, and Šaternik.

The graphic arts in Belaruś, in particular **Painting**, are relatively well represented in the galleries of the National Museum of Art in Minsk, though naturally these cannot, and do not include examples of frescoes and wall paintings. The earliest frescoes are to be found in the magnificent Church of *St. Euphrosyne* \*\* in Polacak, though these, after seventy years of wilful neglect are at present undergoing restoration. The predominant influence on these, and later frescoes, with their Romano-Byzantine austerity, is Serbian and Bulgarian. That influence continued in the works of Master Andrej z Litvy (fl. 1386-1400)\*\*\*, who came from Lithuania-Belaruś, along with others, to decorate the churches of Lublin, Sandomir and Krakow for the Grand Duke Jahajla, after his marriage to the Polish Queen Jadwiha. His magnificent chancel frescoes in the Chapel Royal of Lublin castle, depicting the *Passion of Christ*, whilst in the Balkan Byzantine tradition, reveal strong Gothic influences in the subject matter and detail of his iconography ( e.g. *The Scourging* and *Mocking of Christ* ). Early paintings from the 15th and 16th century, whilst remaining close to Byzantine abstract iconography, also contain decorative halos and patterned gilt backgrounds in the Italo-Greek style. The frescoes of the *Supraśl Church of the Annun-*



ciation (c.1510)\*\* , painted under the direction of Serbian Masters, also show trends toward Renaissance realism in the representation of human figures. It is unfortunate that fac-simile reproductions are not on display and are hard to come by in Minsk.

The high-water mark of Belarusan Renaissance art is reached in the magnificent Biblical wood-engravings of Francis Skaryna (c.1480-1550)\*\*\*, which rival the best works of the South German school (he knew Albrecht Duerer), and which played an important part in conditioning the development of taste in Belaruś. His *Coronation of the Heavenly Bride, Divine Wisdom*, and the *Lamentation of Jeremiah* are remarkable for their composition, naturalism and draughtsmanship, whilst his *March of the Twelve Tribes of Israel* and decorative initialling are rich in allegorical and cabalistic significance. A strong link developed between the engravings of the *Vilnia* and *Kuciejna* schools (late 16th-17th centuries) and Belarusan iconographers, who used them as patterns for their religious paintings. There is also an obvious relationship between iconography and secular portrait painting, exemplified by the anonymous *Portrait of Griselda Sapieha* (1630). The introduction of secular symbolic details into iconography is strikingly illustrated in the 16th and 17th century icons in the Minsk Museum of Art (*St. Paraskieva* [c1575], *The Virgin and Child of the Unfading flower* [1649])\*\*, where the crowns and flower-sprinkled robes of the Madonna express a mystic union between the material and spiritual world. It appears forcefully also in the work of Piotra Jaúsiejevič of Halyniec (1649), in which the holy women are vested in folk-emboidery. Among the greatest Belarusan iconographers are the Master of Malarita\*\*\* (fl.1648-1650), the Master of Stolin\* (fl.1690-1700), and Master Markianovič\*\* (fl.1758-1766). Many schools of rustic and naive iconography\* also flourished, and have all the vigour and verve of Transylvanian glass-painting and Epinal engravings.

Secular painting in Belaruś took the form mainly of portraiture, much of which was anonymous before the 18th century. Jan Damel (1780-1840) worked in Minsk as a portrait painter and figurative artist; Valencij Vankovič\* (1799-1842) was a local artist of outstanding talent as portraitist. Arguably the greatest figure in Belarusan art of the 19th century was Ivan Chrucki \*\*\* (1810-1885), whose sensitive portraits and luminous still-life paintings have been assiduously collected by Russian and Polish art-galleries. He also ventured into the field of iconography, painting the iconostases of a number of churches in Vilnia and Koúna (1845-1855) in the romantic manner. In the early part of the century, the leading landscape and genre artists were Vikencij Dmachoúski (1807-



1862), Napoleon Orda (1807-1883) and Kazimir Alchimovič (1840-1917), all native-born Belarusians, of whom Orda left a precious heritage of lithographs depicting country churches, castles and mansions which are now no more. Apalonyj Haroŭski (1833-1900), another native of the Minsk region, travelled abroad and achieved a measure of international success, exhibiting his works in Paris, Brussels and St-Petersburg; he is particularly remembered for his landscapes of the Svislač river and the Minsk countryside. *The Portrait of a girl* and *The Old Shepherd* are the best known works of another highly gifted painter from the Minsk district, Mikadzim Silivanovič \* (1830-1918). Henrych Vejsenhof (1859-1922), one of the organisers of the *Minsk Society of Amateurs of the Fine Arts* in vul. Padhornaja, left a number of original landscapes in a precise and somewhat brittle figurative style deriving from the *Ecole de Barbizon*. The outstanding artist of the turn of the century was Stanislaŭ Bohuš-Sestržancievič\* (1869-1927), of aristocratic Belarusian descent, who studied art at Vilnia and St-Petersburg. The academistic realism of his paintings, such as *Uborka Siena* ("Hay-making") and more particularly of his line drawings, was taken up in the first half of the 20th century by A. Tyčyna (1897-1986) and the school of socialist romanticism. He was also a gifted satirical caricaturist, his *Bal u Minsku* ("A Ball in Minsk") being a good example of his style in this genre.

An important role in the formation of young artists in Belaruś was played by the opening of art-schools, the most significant being that of Jury Judal Pen\*\* (1854-1937) in Viciebsk, established in 1898 and attended by such students, later to become world-famous artists, as Marc Chagall\*\*\*, K. Malevič\*\*\*, S. Judovin\*, Z. Azhur\*\* and many others. Another school was opened in Minsk in 1906 by the Paris-trained artist Jakaŭ Jankel Kruher\* (1869-1940), a native of the capital, whose portraits of the Belarusian poets Janka Kupala, Jakub Kolas, and Zmitrok Biadula show him as a painter of considerable stature. The impressionist school is represented by another outstanding landscape artist of the period, Vitaŭt Bialynicki-Birula\* (1872-1957); a representative selection of his works is on display at the *Bialynicki Museum* \* in Mahiloŭ. Other modernist trends were represented by the eminent, self-proclaimed *tutejšy* artist Ferdinand Ruščyč (1870-1936), the naive visionary Jazep Drazdovič (1888-1954), together with M. Staniuta\* (1881-1974), A. Astapovič\* (1896-1941), the theatrical designer A. Maryks (1890-1976) and U. Kudrevič (1884-1957), all of whose imaginative works from the 1920s deserve a better showing. Another internationally known artist, Chaim Soutine\*\*\* (1894-1943), born in Smilavičy some 30 km from



the Belarusan capital and later a friend of Marc Chagall and Modigliani, received his early artistic training in Minsk, before completing his studies in Vilnia and Paris. He became a leading influence on the abstract impressionist school of the 1950s.

Many talented artists are to be numbered among the exponents of "Socialist realism" - in effect a form of neo-romanticism. Ramanaú, Volkaú, Šybnieú and Volkaú have left didactic, if not apothotic works on themes of "Socialist construction", the "Great Fatherland War" and miscellaneous *Leniniana*, which as in Šybnieú's *Jost takaja partyja!* ("But there is such a party!"), occasionally border on the burlesque, and tend to inhibit a fair appreciation of their achievements elsewhere. The works of the very able artist M. Savicki - his *Partisan Madonna* for example - constitute nonetheless a haunting and psychotically disturbing heritage. Among the outstanding portraitists of this period (1930-1970) are M. Filipovič\*, I. Achremčyk, U. Stalmašonak\*, and R. Krolevič. Leading landscapists include U. Cvirka\* (b. 1913), V. Hramyka\*, S. Katkoú, F. Daraškievič, A. Krol, M. Kasmačoú, D. Alejnik. and M. Kasakievič. Somewhat apart stand K. Zaviša\* (1904-1984), a quiet lover of the Belarusan countryside and views of old Minsk; also Barys Malkin (1908-1972), an independent-minded theatrical and landscape artist.

A number of Belarusan artists, emulating Haroúski and Chagall, have moved into the international art world. These include the unjustly neglected Mikoła Kazak\* (b.1917), a former student and teacher at Warsaw College of Fine Arts, and in Baranovičy (1941-43), now in the United States. An abstract artist of distinction, he moved from expressionism to an interesting concept of physical Art as the action of *Positive and Negative Space*. More recently Uł. Paúloúski, B. Zaboraú\* and V. Marcynčyk\* have all exhibited in Paris and other West European art centres, where they have contributed to a broadening of interest in Belarusan themes.

Certain **Decorative arts** have been developed in Belaruś in a highly original way over the centuries. The lost *Cross of St Euphrosyne* of Polacak by Lazar Bokša (1161) is the nearest thing Belaruś had to the Crown Jewels; it is believed to have been taken to Moscow by the Secret Police in 1941. Classical Belarusan chased-gold and silverware\*\*; jewelry; Slucak *pajasy* (brocade girdles)\*\*\*; furniture - Belarusan artisans were in high demand in 17th century Muscovy; crystal and glassware\*\* (Urečie, Najliboki and Minsk); heraldic and figurative ceramic tiles\*; stained glass and mosaics; patterned carpets (Hrodnia and Viciebsk); and fine wrought iron\*\*\* have for centuries been highly prized collectors' pieces.



The fabulous 18th century *Royal doors* \*\*\* from the Church of Lemasevičy in the Minsk Museum of Art represents the apotheosis of the art of straw-plaiting. Traditional and modern calligraphy represent yet again a subtle blend of Eastern and Western styles. Belarusan Folk-embroidered linen was considered fit apparel for the Queen of Heaven by 17th century iconographers. Other more rustic arts, include painted and carved *kufry* (dowry-chests); carved and fretwork window-surrounds; and straw-incrustation, which apart from its Žlobin centre has skilled masters amongst the Belarusans of North America (M. Šust).

It is said that the art of cookery or **Cuisine** combines all the other arts. Certainly in Belarusan painting and literature it holds a place of almost ritual honour. The iconographers of the 17th and 18th centuries saw to it that tables were properly set with eating-utensils, loaves, fruit and food fit for a Trinity of angels; Ivan Chrucki's still-life paintings abound with teal, partridges, mushrooms, pumpkins, peaches and flag-ons of wine. Above the sizzling of roast game or goose, nostalgically described by Ivan Mialeška in 1589, down to the bubbling of the humble five spoonfuls of *zacirka*, the milk gruel coveted by Zmitrok Biadula a hundred years ago, we can almost hear the epicurean sculptor Azhur smacking his lips over dainties proffered to him amongst the *marqueterie* and soft lights of the now vanished *Hotel Europa* in Minsk. Belarusan cookery is not unlike traditional Belgian cuisine. The gods themselves, so *Taras on Parnassus* (1837) tells us, feasted on old-fashioned country fare, served to them with the traditional *harelka* ("rye spirit") by Hebe herself: "First she dished up stewed neeps and cabbage, / And cracklings in rich broth of pease, / with cream of barley, milk aplenty, / Pray, eat as much as e'er you please! / Then came cool jelly, rich with plums, / buckwheat agleam with bacon fat: / And here's fried goose for everyone - / No holding back the gods from that ! / But when the Sausage made his entry, / With oatmeal bockings from the hob, / Our Taras' lips grew moist with hunger, / His belly grumbled like a mob. / Anon the gods sat drinking pretty, / From flask to goblet flowed the gin. / Befuddled, they strike up a ditty, / Like some lewd sing-song at an inn." Whilst the gods regaled themselves on common country fare, the nobility could always make do with some of the more exotic dishes relished by Jan Mialeška in the 16th century: "How tasty was goose with mushrooms\*\*, duckling with sweet peppers\*\*, liver with onions or garlic, and if this did not suffice, a pilau of rice with saffron ". Should further refinements be required, the Grand-Ducal recipes published in Vilnia in 1830 by Jan Šytler, Master Cook to Eustace Sapieha, scion of a princely house from Polacak, might serve to titillate jaded aristocratic palates: a



*Chaladnik*\*\* or iced summer soup [made of sour cream, sorrel, chopped hard boiled eggs, spring onions, cucumbers, asparagus, young beets and fish bouillon, sharpened to taste with champagne]; a soup of wild mushrooms; *Crayfish patties*\*\*; a joint of roast bison or beef\*\*\*; pike in aspic; capon with truffles; cold calves brains with olive sauce; a casserole of hare and sausages\*\*; quails in puff-pastry; *pheasant with champagne and oranges*; a pate of calves liver; *pork with cherry and rum sauce*; beef and sauerkraut *bigos* style\*\*; venison with red cabbage; duck stuffed with macaroni; or *roulade* of boar's head. For sweet there were compotes of cranberries or gooseberries, apple *marmulade* \*, coffee cream, *creme brule*, chocolate *babka* and pineapple ice-cream.

One day, perhaps, some poet will celebrate these dishes with the same verve Kolas displayed over the children's Sunday breakfast of *bliny* or pancakes\*\* in his poem *Novaja ziamla* (1923): "The batter gave a rapid sizzle, / Noisily flowed the griddle over, / Then into the hell heat of the oven, / And, in the twinkling of an eye-lid, / Out from it ready baked like tiles, came / Pancakes, underneath all waffled, / And rising up with splendid puffing." Tossed by the mother, they were caught by the children "vying / To catch the pancakes in their flying, / and spread them keenly with good dripping. / The chopped meat stood there in its kitchen / Bowl, and the things to give a savour / Of sauce, - 'twas no exotic flavour / - Onion, pepper and bayleaf, taken / With a few slices of good bacon, / Flour and *kvass*, nothing more...." The recipe is, of course, that of the traditional gravy-soup *Vieraščaka* \*, - though Kolas recommends a bayleaf rather than the customary grated celery-root.

Breakfast (*Śnedannie*) in Belaruś is, as one gathers from the poet, a somewhat more substantial meal than the average "Continental breakfast" of tea or coffee, rolls or pastry, butter and jam. In addition to these, a porridge of buckwheat, barley or cracked wheat with cream may be served, followed by boiled eggs, cold sausage and ham, fried eggs with salami (*jaječnia*), cream cheese or yellow ("Dutch") cheese, rounded off with stewed sauerkraut, bacon, sausages and potatoes. Fruit juice and mineral water may be served along with the coffee or tea. Lunch (*Abied*) is invariably a hot meal, comprising a starter - soup, or hors-d'oeuvre of fish or smoked meats, a main course such as roast beef, roast fowl, or pork cutlets *au gratin* \* with melted cheese, accompanied by vegetables of all kinds, and followed by a sweet such as cucumbers with honey\*\*, fruit jelly (*kisiel*), or a compote of seasonal fruits or cranberries, wurtleberries and red bilberries\*\*. The Evening meal (*Viačera*) is lighter, and may consist of a substantial *barsč* with game and beans\*\*, celery soup, or bouillon with *kalduny*\*\*\* (delicate minced



pork, garlic and marrow dumplings in chicken *bouillon*), pork *schnitzel*, cold meats, sausages and brawn with *malasol* (salted) or vinegared pickles, salads (usually cucumber and tomato in dill and sour-cream dressing) and pastries or tarts with coffee. There is a fourth indeterminate meal called "Tea" (*Herbata*), served at no fixed time, but which - the foreign visitor, if invited, should be warned - may run from tea and a simple cake to, a groaning table of cold cuts, *kanapki* (small open sandwiches)\*, *pate*, galantine, salads, herring snacks\*, sausages, chopped eggs, dried fish, pickled mushrooms and pears\*, and many other dainties, including perhaps a superlative *harelka* \*\* of "production artisanale".

The ethnographer M. Nikifarowski (1845-1910) of Viciebsk compiled one of the first serious collections of folk-recipes, many of which remain in use to this day, of which a few have been republished in the book *Belaruskaja Kuchnia*, (Minsk 1977). Other 19th. century contemporaries - A. Kirkor, P. Šejn, A. Dembavecki and E. Ramanaú - produced similar collections. The versatile potato is of course immensely popular in Belaruś, as in other countries, but Belarusans, like the Irish, relish other good things besides: Roast meats (*Piačysta*) - beef or goose for the affluent, but more generally pork - with baps, pancakes and dumplings of all kinds to dunk in the gravy, were the traditional mainstay of the Belarusan meal. The French gourmet Edouard de Pomiane prized the hams and smoked meats of Litva-Belaruś above those of Parma.

Daytime drinks include milk, sweet or sour, buttermilk, apple *kvass* ("fizz"), birch wine\*\*, *napitak* (stewed fruit juice) and mineral water. Traditional alcoholic drinks include an almost inexhaustible range of *harelka* (grain spirit) - flavoured with lemon, buffalo grass (*Zubroúka*)\* forest herbs (*Bielaviežskaja*)\*\* rowanberries (*Kalinoúka*)\*\*, juniper, blackcurrant leaves, - mead or honey *kvass* (*miadavucha*), strong beer (formerly up to 12% proof!); French, Spanish, Hungarian or Moldavian wines, Cognac and quite decent Georgian brandies, were popular in establishment households; for special occasions there was the noble liqueur *Krupnik* \*\*\* (honey and spiced *harelka*) and for the brave, or those close to death - *Belaruski Balsam*. Traditionally beer is the national drink, usually quite strong: Minsk brews registered 12% of alcohol, until reduced by Tsarist tyranny to 4%. Some white wine is produced in the Homiel region.

The history and culture of Belarus has for many years been the subject of widening interest, and has given rise to a corpus of **International Belarusan Studies**, within the framework of International Organisations, Universities, Learned Societies and Cultural Associations.



From the Middle Ages scholars, including St. Euphrosyne of Polacak, travelled to Jerusalem or Rome to acquire learning. In the 15th century Belarusian students were to be met at the universities of Krakow, Prague, Paris and Padua. Scholars from East and West, such as Herberstein (1549), Guagnini (1578), Paul of Aleppo (1654) and E. Henderson (1826) wrote about Belarus in their works. Belarusian students frequented the Lithuanian-Belarusian college in Krakow, the Greek college in Rome, as well as the University of Leipzig. In the 19th century many learned works on Belarusian ethnography, history, and culture were produced at the universities of Vilnia, Warsaw, Moscow, and St. Petersburg. From 1920 onwards the BNR government in exile procured facilities for numerous Belarusian students to graduate at the University of Prague, and after 1945 the Universities of Marburg and Louvain established halls of residence for Belarusian students. During the 1920s through the Institute of Belarusian Culture in Minsk, and later through the National University, publications on Belarusian studies began to reach the major world Universities, Institutes and Libraries such as Paris, Oxford, Utrecht, Leyden, Copenhagen, Lund, Uppsala, Berlin, Vienna, and New York on a regular basis. This new material, taken in conjunction with the works of other overseas specialised bodies - the BNR Ministry of Culture in Kaunas, Lithuania (*Kryvič* 1923), the Belarusian-American National Council of Chicago (1930), the Belarusian Cultural Association in Prague (*Iskry Skaryny* 1931), the Belarusian Institute of Economics and Culture in Vilnia (*Kalośsie* 1935), the Belarusian *Chaúrus* of Paris (1938), led a number of Western scholars to develop an interest in the field of Belarusian studies - Professor R. Martel of Paris (1929), Prof. Robert Auty of Oxford (1938), Professor A. Jobert of Grenoble (1940), and Professor R. de Bray of London (1950), amongst others. During the so-called period of stagnation in Belarus after the Second World War, scholarship was largely fettered by narrow ideological considerations. Nevertheless the accession of the Republic of Belarus to UNESCO was a significant step forward in the international cultural arena. Much valuable work was also done in emigration by a number of academic organisations, associations and publishing houses - The *Žypšyna* Literary Association (Michelsdorf 1946), *Backaúščyna* (Munich 1947), Belarus (New York 1948), *Božym Šlacham* (Paris 1947), the Association of Belarusians of Great Britain (London 1946), the Belarusian Youth Association of France (Paris 1948), the Institute for the Study of the USSR, (Munich 1952), the Belarusian Institute of Arts and Sciences (New York 1952), The Anglo-Belarusian Society (London 1954), the Belarusian Youth Association of America (Cleveland 1954), the P. Kryčeúski Foundation (New



York), the Francis Skaryna Belarusan Library, (London 1971), with other organisations in Belgium, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Argentina, Canada, and Australia. Around these organisations a group of Belarusists has grown up over the last forty years, whose published works in many languages have made a substantial contribution to the spread of knowledge about Belaruś and its culture. Among the best-known of these are Prof. A. B. McMillin (London), Dr. V. Tumaś (New York), Dr. J. Zaprudnik (New York), J. Dingley (London), Prof. Moshe Altbauer (Jerusalem), V. Kipiel (New Jersey), P. Wexler (Tel Aviv), Prof. T. Bird (Queens University, NY), Dr Karl Gutschmidt (Berlin), Mgr. A. Nadson (London). and Dr Karl Neureiter (Graz). On the initiative of Dr. Adam Maldzis an International Association of Belarusists has now been established in Minsk since 1991 to promote and coordinate the activities of scholars in the field of Belarusan Studies.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT MINSK

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*Geography, climate, flora and fauna, population, industry and commerce, agriculture, communications.*

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The city of Minsk (traditionally *Mensk*) lies on a low plateau in the North European plain, near the summit of a range of wooded hills - the Belarusan Uplands. Its basic **Geography** consists of a watershed between the Baltic and the Black Sea. The latitude of Minsk is approximately the same as that of Dublin and Hamburg (lat. 53° 54' 15"; long. 23° 13' 15"). From its highest points at Mount Kojdan (346m.) and *Lysa Hora* (Bald Mountain) (341m.) the Minsk uplands slope gently southward, with a more abrupt escarpment on the northern side giving that region a picturesque hilly appearance. The whole of Belaruś is generally low-lying river valley and lakeland, but edged on all sides with ranges of hills, and divided by a broad central plateau running from east to west.

The city's altitude at 200m. renders the **Climate** slightly cooler than in neighbouring, less elevated areas. Climatic conditions are relatively moderate and humid, and represent a transition between the maritime climate of northern central, and the continental climate of eastern central Europe. The July mean temperature is 17,5° C with a rainfall of some 60cm annually. There is a three months winter season, with a mean



temperature of  $-6^{\circ}\text{C}$ , but thaws frequently occur from January to March, and mild winters are not uncommon. Conditions in the south of the country round *Homiel* and *Bierascie* (Brest) are similar to those of the Rhineland, whilst the northern areas near *Polacak* (Polotzk) are on the same latitude as Copenhagen and southern Sweden.

As to its **Flora**, about one third of the country is forest land with a predominance of pine and some fir in the north east; broad-leaved deciduous trees (oak, maple, beech and linden) are prevalent in central and south-western areas. The green oak is widespread, and has become a symbol of the national permanency of Belaruś. The river and lake country provide rich grasslands, whilst in the southern marshes and sandy hills aspen trees, heathland and numerous varieties of wild berries and mushrooms flourish. Its **Fauna** includes many species of game - bison, brown bears, beavers, wild boar, red deer, wolves, roe-deer, otters, pine-marten and hare. The forests and lakes sustain numerous species of wildfowl - eagles, hawks, buzzards, capercailzie, partridge, pheasant, nightingales, blackbirds, cuckoos, wild geese, ducks and others. The rivers and lakes of Belaruś are well stocked with fresh water fish - pike, crucian, *menki*, trout, carp, perch, loach and eels.

The **Population** of Minsk has fluctuated over the centuries, having from its inception been subject to invasion, fire and plague. It was razed by the Tatars in 1240 and in 1503, sacked by the Russians in 1653 and 1708, and largely ruined during the Nazi-Soviet conflict of 1941-1944. The great fires of 1738 and 1778 wrought considerable destruction. With episodic fluctuations the population has risen from a few thousand in the 16th century to 6.700 in 1800, 90.000 by the end of the 19th century, and almost two million at the end of the 20th century. Because of its position and role as a trading centre Minsk has always been a cosmopolitan city, with a Tatar suburb, a substantial Jewish quarter - 52% of the population were Jews in 1900, - Russians, Poles, Balts, Germans, and of course a substantial minority of Belarusans. Since 1945 the latter now make up approximately 78% of the population, with Balts, Ukrainians and miscellaneous Russian, Caucasian and Central Asian peoples providing an allogeous minority. Some 60% of the inhabitants profess the Orthodox Faith, 18% the Catholic Religion, 5% are Evangelicals, 2% others and 15% agnostics or atheists.

Belarusan is now the only official State **Language** of Belaruś. Prior to Independence the Russian language ranked as the second State language, but within the general framework of the former Soviet Union, it became the common language of business and administration. In the cities Belarusan was seldom heard or displayed in the streets. Neverthe-



less, the *Minsk dialect* is the basis of modern literary Belarusian, and several vocabularies of the local vernacular were published by M. Žydovič in the 1970s. The 'Russian' spoken by most town-dwellers is ideosyncatic, and in reality a kind of "creole" dialect. Since 1991 street-names and notices in the Belarusian language have slowly been replacing the Russian (introduced after 1793), and the confusion over constantly renamed streets under Bolshevik rule is being avoided by a gradual reversion to the long-standing historic names. Even in the Churches, formerly the nurseries of "pidjin" Russian and Polish, standard Belarusian is being increasingly introduced. Some English, French, German, Polish and Yiddish is also spoken.

The **Agriculture** of the Minsk area includes flax and dairy farming to the north-east, potato, sugar beet, apiculture and pig raising to the east, and the cultivation of cereals in the west. Lumbering and peat-cutting were important rural activities in a country with minimal coal stocks. Mining activities are carried on in relation to salt and phosphates, but the prospection and exploitation of mineral resources was restricted by the country's planned 'breadbasket' role in the former Soviet economy. From the earliest times the streams and waterways from the central highlands were harnessed for **Industry**: watermills were important sources of energy for the metallurgical, paper, textile and brewing industries which flourished in the area. In Grand Ducal times ship-building materials - sail-cloth, rope, masts, timber, and tar - exported to western Europe, were the main source of wealth. Since the 19th century machine construction and engineering has played an increasingly significant role in the industrial life of Minsk, and already at the beginning of the century substantial firms such as Jakobsen Livšyc and Levin were widely known for their engineering and electrical expertise; the Lekkert Brewery and the Cukerman-Davidson cigarette factory also contributed greatly to municipal prosperity. Quality glassware and ceramics were also produced in the Minsk area as far back as the 16th century. In the 20th century the tractor works, as well as electronic and precision instrument-making, and the *Kamunarka* confectionery factory assumed increasing importance, and it is perhaps for these products that Minsk is best known in the international market. The strategic importance of Minsk, and central Belarus generally in the Defence system of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, restricted free travel and seriously inhibited the development of an organised tourist industry.

Traditionally the geographical position of Minsk has served to promote it as a centre of **Communications**. From the tenth century onward,



the city was an important station for river traffic between the rivers Dniapro, Nioman, Prypiac and Buh. It also lay on the main land-bridge between the cities of North Germany, Silesia and Bohemia and the resources of Muscovy, the Urals and Asia, which made it a favoured route for invasions to the west or to the east. With the coming of the railways, the importance of Minsk was enhanced as a main station on the line linking Paris, Berlin, and Warsaw to Moscow and the Trans-Siberian network, as well as a junction on the Black-Sea Baltic line from Rostov-on-Don via Romny, Vilnia and the port of Liepaja in Latvia. An air communications absurdity, whereby traffic from Western Europe to Minsk was routed via Moscow, some 500 miles to the east, has now ended and there are direct flights to the Belarusan capital by the national airline *Belavia*, and by *Lufthansa*, *Lot* and other services from New York, Shannon, Frankfurt, Zurich, Warsaw, Vienna and a number of other cities. There are adequate metalled roads linking Minsk with Vilnia and the Baltic seaboard, Moscow, Kiev, Warsaw and Central Europe.

The city has a good network of buses, a modern underground railway and readily available taxis (fares by meter are, by reason of inflation, subject to an uplift or negotiable).



# **A SHORT HISTORY OF MINSK**



## *The Origins and Early History*

There are many legends relating to the foundation of Minsk and the origin of its name. Situated on the watershed of the river-routes linking the Baltic to the Black Sea, its trading history going back to prehistoric times, some have thought that city owes its name to the word *miena* or "barter". Others look to a hill-fort known as *Haradyščy* by *Stročyce*, a "Skansen"-village a few kilometres to the west of the city on the banks of the river *Menka*, which flows into the river *Ptyč*, and on to join the *Prypiac* and *Dniapro*. A heroic folk-legend has it that a giant called *Menesk* or *Minč* kept a mill, by the banks of a river, and ground rocks and stones to make flour for bread, in order to feed the war-band he had assembled to protect his settlement, and safeguard its prosperity. This depended, no doubt, on the portage of goods between the headwaters of the *Prypiat*, *Dniapro* and *Nioman*. So *Menesk* - later *Mensk* - came into being. The reference to 'stone-flour' may allude to the kneading and baking of potters clay used in the brick-making and ceramics industry, which from the earliest times flourished in the area. There was no lack of wood to fire the kilns.

In prehistoric times the 'domain of the bear' predominated over the 'domain of the goose' (as Napoleon's soldiers aptly dubbed the forest- and meadow-lands of this area), with vast and impenetrable primeval forests covering most of the country, and serving as a Delphic 'wooden wall' to its successive inhabitants against attacks from the East. Scattered Lithuanians and *Jatvyhs* hunted and gathered, until merged with the more advanced Slavonic farming tribes, moving northwards from the Carpathians during the so-called Dark Ages. These settled the area forming the watershed of the rivers flowing to the Baltic and the Black Sea, where the early Belarusians founded prosperous townships at *Polacak*, *Viciebsk*, *Smalensk*, *Minsk* and *Horadnia*. Of these *Polacak*, first mentioned in the chronicles for 862, was to become the most important.

During the era of Viking expansion along the East European waterways, many towns and principalities were ruled over by Scandinavian warlords; in the 9th century the lands of *Polacak* were raided by two Viking princes *Askold* and *Dir*, and by the last quarter of the 10th century a Prince *Rohvalad* (*Norse*: *Ragnvald*) reigned over the Belarusian principality of which early *Minsk* formed part. The Belarusian nobility to this day distinguishes between families of old Lithuanian and those of Scandinavian descent (*Hedyminovičy* and *Rurikovičy*).



## *Minsk and the Principality of Polacak (989 - 1249)*

Rohvalad's daughter Rahnieda (*Norse*: Ragnheid) was baptised; she became the wife of Prince Volodymir (*Norse*: Valdemar) of Kiev, and bore him a son Iziaslaú. Volodymir was baptised a Christian by missionaries from Constantinople in 988; the population of Polacak accepted Christianity in 989, and by 992 the city had its own Bishop. On the death of Volodymir, Iziaslaú became Prince of Polacak, and his half-brother Jaraslav - Volodymir's son by a previous marriage - became Prince of Novgorod and later of Kiev. Other sons acquired his domains among the Finno-Ugric tribes of what was to become Muscovy. "Since that time, as the chronicler recorded, the grandchildren of Rohvalad raised the sword against the grandchildren of Jaroslav". From the outset there was little unity between the warring Princes of "Ruś". Isiaslaú (d. 1001) of Polacak, the son of Rogvalad was succeeded by his son Bračaslaú, who in turn was followed by his son Usiaslaú the Enchanter (1044-1101).

The dynastic rivalry between the two houses of Kiev and Polacak explains the turbulent history of Minsk in its early years, situate as it was on the southern borders of the latter principality. The centre of the town had shifted to a new site, giving access to the headwaters of the Vilja and the Biarazina, at the confluence of the Niamiha and Svislač rivers. Here also the steep banks of the Niamiha, the high ground south of the stream and Trinity Golden hill offered a good defensive position. Public buildings, dwelling houses and fortifications were raised of timber. The first recorded mention of Minsk in 1066 however relates to the dynastic wars with Kiev. After Usiaslaú of Polacak had raided Novgorod, and brought back to his capital the bells of the Cathedral of St. Sophia, to hang them in his own Cathedral of that name, the three sons of Jaroslav in retribution attacked the city of Minsk: "The people of Menesk (Minsk) barricaded themselves in the town, but the three brothers, took Menesk and killed the men, carried off the women and children into captivity, and went towards the Niamiha".

Treacherously seized whilst attending a parley in Smalensk with Isiaslaú and the princes of Kiev in 1067, Usiaslaú and his two sons were held captive in Kiev, until an uprising of the inhabitants set them free. Prince Isiaslaú fled to Poland, and the Prince of Polacak was offered the throne of Kiev in his stead. The story goes that Usiaslaú longed to return home, and declined the honour for the love of his native land: "He was, as the chronicler records, called back to Polacak by the pealing



bells of St. Sophia." The first uncensored Belarusian historical opera to be performed in Minsk, *Usiaslaú the Enchanter, Prince of Polacak* (1944) by the composer M. Kulikovič, dealt with this romantic theme. The bells of St. Sophia were to become for Belarusian exiles the symbol of the call of the homeland.

Usiaslaú's principality of Polacak was, on his death, divided between his sons: the fiefdom of Minsk fell to Hleb, who thus became the first sovereign prince of the city. Internecine quarrels weakened the northern principalities, and encouraged the Kievans to reopen hostilities. In 1104 they ravaged the principality of Minsk, and shortly thereafter the warlike Lithuanians moved in from the west. Vladimir Monomach again besieged and took Minsk in 1116. Three years later in



*One of the remaining castle buildings.*

1119, in a further campaign against Polacak, after a battle on the banks of the Biarazina, the Kievans "attacked the town, and left neither man nor beast in it." Prince Hleb Usiaslavič, together with his two sons Rascislaú and Valadar, was taken into captivity, where he died in exile later that year. He was succeeded as Prince of Minsk by his son Rascislaú, but yet again the Kievans attacked in 1129, and placed their nominee Isiaslaú Mścislavič on the throne, dispatching Hleb's children to serve the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople.

However the principality reverted to the princes of Polacak in 1146, with the return of the two sons of Hleb, Rascislaú and after him Valadar (1151-1158), though Syrakomla gives different dates, and the chronicles for this period are incomplete. On the death of the latter prince, Minsk is thought to have been governed by Valadar's son Prince Vasyłka, at least until 1195. During the reign of the Grand Duke Mindaúh (c.1200-1263)



of Lithuania, Polacak entered into an alliance with him to expel the Baltic Germans, who had invaded the principality. Thereafter it appears to have become a Lithuanian apanage, for by 1220 the overlord of Minsk was Prince Erdzivil, a nephew of Mindaúh. Minsk continued as a semi-independent principality allied with Lithuania, for as late as 1326 the records mention a Prince Todar Sviataslavič of Minsk as a witness to a Treaty between the Grand Duke Hedymin (d. 1341) and the city-state of Novgorod.

The fall of Kiev to the Mongols in 1240 during the great invasion of Batu Khan, the submission of Jaroslav, Grand Duke of Moscow to the Tatars in 1243 and the Lithuanian victory over the Asian invaders first at Kojdanava (1241) under Prince Skirmunt and then at Kruta Hora (1249) a few miles from Minsk, served to consolidate the union between the Belarusan principalities and the Grand Duchy. In 1252 Mindaúh and his leading nobles were baptised, and the Grand Duke was crowned with the approval of Pope Innocent IV in 1253. He fixed his capital in the Belarusan city of Navahradak, some 100 km to the west of Minsk.

### ***The Early Years of the Grand Duchy (1250 - 1499)***

Little is known of the history of the city under the early Grand Dukes Vajšelak (d. 1269), Trojden (1271-1282), and Lutaver (1282-1295). In 1323, during the reign of Hedymin (1316-1341), the capital of the Grand Duchy was moved from Navahradak to Vilnia.

The fact that Prince Jaunut Hedyminavič received from the Grand Duke Kejstut the principality of Zaslaúe, and reigned in Minsk in 1345, where he was succeeded his son Michal, suggests that the city was by then a royal suzerainty. Prince Michal was present at the coronation in 1386 of Grand Duke Jahajla as King of Poland in Krakow, and gave his oath of allegiance "for himself and his own". In 1390 Jahajla endowed a Catholic Church in Minsk, dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the Assumption of Our Lady, perhaps in part performance of his written bond on his marriage in 1389 to Queen Jadvyha of Poland, to establish Latin-rite Catholicism in his domains; its site in the city is not known, and the wooden building is reputed to have been destroyed by fire in 1409. Many of the suzerains of Russian principalities to the east of Smalensk, anxious for protection against Moscow - now reduced to the state of a Tatar satrapy, - sought alliance or union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, so that soon the Grand Duke Alhierd (1345-1377) acquired the title of *Rex Litvinorum Ruthenorumque*, with domains stretching



from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Union did not imply subservience however; and it is noted by Syrakomla that the banner of Minsk was not among the united army of Lithuanians, Belarusans and Poles, who under Grand Duke Vitaút (1392-1430) defeated the Teutonic Order at the Battle of Gruenwald in 1410. The city had sided with Prince Svidrigajla in a dynastic dispute against Grand Duke Hedymin, and Prince Urustaj of Minsk appeared in 1408, as a witness to a Treaty of mutual aid signed between Svidrigajla and the Grand Duke Basil of Moscow. The establishment of Minsk as a *Namiesnictva* (Royal Shire) in 1413 coincides with the absence, noted by Syrakomla, of the city's seal from the Charter of Horadla in that year, - though few other noblemen of the Greek-rite were present at that conference. Thereafter the city appears to have been governed by a *namiesnik* or Sheriff representing the Grand Ducal authority as hereditary Prince of Zaslaúe. This might indicate that Minsk had declined in importance since the Mongol invasions, the sack of Kiev, and the growing threat to Black Sea trade from the advancing Turks. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the subjection of the Crimean Tatars to Ottoman rule in 1475, were to have far reaching effects on the economic, political and religious life of Minsk, and indeed of the whole Grand Duchy.

### ***Renaissance Minsk (1499 - 1569)***

In 1499 Grand Duke Alexander Jahajlavič granted to the city of Minsk a specially favoured autonomous status known as the *Magdeburg privilege*, manifestly to stimulate trade. This weak and vacillating monarch, in an attempt to pacify his increasingly aggressive Eastern neighbour, the self-proclaimed Tsar Ivan III of Moscow, sought the hand of his daughter the Grand Duchess Helen, whose mother was Sophia Paleologos, a relative of the last Byzantine Emperor. Alexander unwisely signed a marriage contract fraught with opportunities for Muscovite interference in Lithuanian religious affairs and matters of state. Urged on by her Muscovite chaplains, Helen pressed the candidature of her confessor Jonas, Archimandrite of the Ascension monastery in Minsk, to be appointed Metropolitan of Kiev in 1502. This simple but inflexible man, was to be the first Lithuanian Metropolitan since 1439 unwilling to support the Florentine Union, entered into between the Latin and Greek Churches in the face of the Muslim Turkish threat. The highly critical historian Vakar observed that, until the appointment of Jonas,



the Catholics and Orthodox maintained quite friendly relations in Belaruś: "The Orthodox clergy in the Grand Duchy took a sympathetic attitude towards the Union of Florence (1439), and would not have rejected it, save for the direct pressure of Moscow". Therein lay the root of religious discord in the country over the next five centuries.

The visit to Minsk in 1502 of the Grand Duke Alexander and the Grand Duchess Helen did little to avert a succession of disasters. The Eastern principalities of the Grand Duchy were progressively lost to Moscow. Minsk was besieged by the Muscovites, relieved by Prince Hlinski and again sacked, (with the exception of the castle) by the Crimean Tatar Khan, Machmet-Girej (1506). The key Eastern fortress of Smalensk was taken by Tsar Basil III (1513), scarcely before the Grand Duchess Helen of Lithuania, his sister, was cold in her coffin. Fortunately by his victory over the Russians at Orša in 1514, the Hetman of the Grand Duchy, Prince Constantine Astrožski, saved the city from further immediate misfortune. Prior to the battle, the Grand Duke Žyhimunt II (*Pol.* I.) and the whole Court came from Vilnia to Minsk to direct the campaign, in which the *Namiesnik* (sheriff) of the city, Prince Bahdan Zaslaŭski also took part. However, whilst Žyhimunt was away fighting the Teutonic knights in Prussia, the Muscovites in 1519 once again returned to ravage Lahojšk, Minsk, Hajna, Radaškavičy, Barysaŭ and other towns, despite the stout resistance put up by Mikalaj Radzivil, Albrecht Haštold and the then sheriff of Minsk, Michal Zaslaŭski. Both Haštold and Radzivil attended the Vienna Congress of 1515 to set up a coalition against the Turks, and their banners were depicted by Skaryna in his allegorical engraving of the *March of the Twelve Tribes* (1519), as examples of "worthy princes and commanders to protect us from the hand of the heathen". Evidence of the impoverishment of the city is to be found in the military levies for 1529 fixing at 1,500 *kop hrošaj* the contribution from Vilnia, 300 from Koŭna, Mahiloŭ: 200, Biariescie: 150, whilst Minsk was only required to underwrite 50 *kop*.

The sorry decline of the traditional Greek- and Latin-rite churches in Belaruś, both of which had become corrupt and refused to adopt the Belarusan vernacular, coupled with the failure of attempts to renew the Florentine Union, to consolidate a national church in the face of Muscovite intrigues and the continuing Turkish threat, led many of the most eminent noblemen and soldiers of the age - Radzivil, Sapieha, Kiška, Chadkievič, Pać and others, as well as some of the ablest writers and thinkers of the day, such as Vasil Ciapynski (1530-1603), Symon Budny (1530-1593) and the engaging diarist Todar Eŭlašeŭski (1546-1616) - to embrace the Calvinistic reformed faith. For the less reputable, it was



a convenient means of revoking Church endowments secured by their forebears on family estates, the churches now being divided. Some of the finest Belarusan church architecture of the period in the Byzantino-Gothic style is to be found in the evangelical churches at Zaslaúe (1590), Dzieraúnaja (1590), Novy Svieržan (c.1550), all near Minsk, and Smarhoni (1554) amongst many others. The development of a peculiarly Belarusan art-form in music - the *kantyčka* or hymn, was also largely a product of the Reformation. It was the exodus of the nobles and burghers to Calvinism, rather than any schemings of the Jesuits (who in any case were not then established in Minsk), which resulted in the dereliction of the 13 Greek-rite churches, which according to the local historian Špileúski (1853) had flourished in Minsk at the close of the Middle Ages, including the ancient monastery of the Ascension. Moreover in 1547 the city was once again devastated by fire, which destroyed the Castle and a number of the churches in the Lower Town. As a result, in the latter part of the 16th century the Upper Town was laid out with broader streets and a greater recourse to brickwork in the reconstruction of the city. There were no stone or brick ramparts; the rivers Svislač and Niamiha served as moats to the east and north, whilst to the south and west the main defence was made up of semi-circular earth-works. In the light of the growing threat from the East, the stockade and redoubt in Trinity suburb were strengthened. The defence of the inhabitants of Minsk, however, depended chiefly on the superior fire-power of their artillery, the dense forests to the East, and an embargo by the Catholic European powers on the sale of fire-arms to the troublesome Muscovites.

### ***Minsk under the Commonwealth (1569 - 1648)***

There can be little doubt that the Council of the Stoglav (1551) in Moscow, proclaiming the supremacy of Russian Orthodoxy over all other forms of the Greek-rite faith, the invasion of Belaruś by Ivan IV ("The Terrible"), the subsequent capture and destruction of Polacak (1563-1579) by the Russians, the establishment in 1589 of a Patriarchate of Moscow as the "Third Rome", and the breaking after 1558 of the embargo on arms for Muscovy by Protestant England and Holland, were four events so fraught with danger for the Grand Duchy, that it had virtually no choice other than to seek political Union with the Kingdom of Poland at Lublin in 1569, and renewed ecclesiastical Union with Rome at Bierascie in 1596.



One of many Greek-rite clerics conscious of the danger was Michael Rahoza. In 1576 he was appointed Archimandrite of the Ascension monastery in Minsk, which had remained vacant for several decades. He was consecrated Metropolitan of Kiev in 1588 by the visiting Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople who, "being unable to meet the financial demands of the Turks, had come to the North to look for money" (Guepin). Two years previously, the Patriarch of Antioch, Joachim had returned to his Turkish overlords, "carrying off large sums of money" collected from pious Orthodox believers in Belaruś and Ukraine, which in turn helped the Turks finance their campaigns against the Grand Duchy. The Greek Catholic (Uniate) Archbishop of Polacak, Josaphat Kuncevič, in 1622 stressed this peril in his reply to Chancellor Leú Sapieha's famous letter, reproaching him with his hostility to the Constantinopolitan faction, the non-Uniate Cossacks of Ukraine and their then covert supporters, the Turks: "Are we to allow the Patriarch, a Metropolitan, a bishop, nay, even a *pasha* who has taken the precaution of donning a monks habit and assuming the title of Exarch, to come to this land with janissaries, on the pretext of a pastoral visitation, in order to spy and hatch treasonable plots ? Are we not to prevent them because this would indispose the Cossacks?". Minsk was to play an important part in the struggle for the restoration of the Florentine Union, as the only effective means of ending the pretensions both of the Tsar and Patriarch of Moscow, and of Constantinople, to political and ecclesiastical supremacy over "all the Russias and all the countries of the North". A council of the clergy of the Greek Church was held in Minsk in 1620 presided over by Metropolitan Rutski with a view to obtaining adherence of the passive majority to the Union. The session, according to Syrakomla, appears to have been stormy, as a result of the bold intervention of the conservative, anti-Union monk, Todar Jarmolič. However, as the French church historian Guepin observed, "The extinction of the Ruthenian schism had become a matter of State".

The political union with Poland in 1569, and the problems involved in selecting a joint ruler for the Kingdom and the Grand Duchy, resulted in some curious situations, as where a reluctant French Prince, Henri de Valois, brought back from Paris as ephemeral sovereign in 1574, by a delegation including Chancellor Radzivil, began appending his signature and seal as Grand Duke to Decrees written in the old Belarusan language. The union also altered the status of Minsk, which became instead of a Grand-Ducal *Namiesnitcva* (Shire), a standard *Vajavodstva* (County) of the *Rečypaspalitaja* (Commonwealth), with Haúryla Harnastaj as its first *Vajavod* (High Constable), Mikola Talvaś



as *Castellan* and Bazyl Tyškievič as *Starosta* (Lord Lieutenant). Minsk became not only the seat of its own County Court and Land Tribunal, but also after 1581 a session town in which the High Court of the Grand Duchy would sit when on circuit, a privilege it shared with Vilnia, and the former capital Navahradak. An occasional pleader in the Minsk Courts was Todar Jeúlašėúski, who in his diary mentions his appearances at the Sessions there in 1583. During the wars against Ivan the Terrible (1563-1579), Minsk once again served as operational headquarters for the Grand Ducal armies, and the King and Grand Duke Žyhimunt Aúhust III (*Pol.* II) sojourned there during the campaigns of 1563 and 1568. His successor Žyhimunt IV (*Pol.* III) confirmed the city in its privileges, granted the merchants the right to hold two Fairs each year and endowed the municipality with additional lands in 1592.

This was not always appreciated by the local population, stirred up by false rumours of impending liturgical and festival changes, and fearful of the interference of an increasingly Polish-orientated sovereign into the affairs of the Grand Duchy. Mialecii Smatrycki (1577-1633), for a time hostile to, but later a supporter of the Uniate cause, had been received at the Salamarecki estate at Siomkava, near Minsk, on his return from Leipzig, and was said by Syrakomla to have written a part of his anti-Uniate polemical work *Threnos or the Complaint of the Eastern Church* during his stay there. When the Union of Bierascie was duly signed in 1596, many of the inhabitants of Minsk accepted it without protest. Those who did not follow the advice of the Vilnia Holy Ghost Confraternity, obtained from the Minsk magistrates in 1613 the grant of land for a church by the Niamiha, and called for non-Uniate priests from Vilnia to service it. The Grand Duke, who resented the establishment of these non-Uniate confraternities which, with their schools and fund-raising activities for Muslim-occupied Constantinople, began to look very much like a hostile state within a state, sent two Uniate Greek-rite priests with royal letters-patent to seize the church building. The fair minded city fathers, however, appear to have been sympathetic to the Minsk confraternity, and received the royal envoys, Luckievič and Hainski, with some coldness, declaring that the city council had many other worries apart from church affairs, and in the event nothing was done. Indeed, the first decade of the 17th century had been a time of sharp famine and plague, as well as of outbreaks of fire in the city (1602), so their claim had some justification. The three attempts in August 1616 of the newly established non-Uniate Cathedral confraternity, led by the shoemaker Danila Palavinka, to seize the Holy-Ghost Cathedral, followed by the unlawful detention by the mob of the Catho-



lic and Uniate burgomasters Alaksiej Filipovič and Siamion Chatkievič merely served to strengthen the fears of the peaceful majority of townspeople over the political undertones of the Confraternity's campaign, and to advance the cause of the Greek Catholics. The publication in 1617 of Lavon Kreúza's *Oborona Jednosti Cerkovnoj* ("Defence of the Union") in reply to Smatrycki's *Threnos* was a skillful and convincing polemical work, which won over many waverers to the Union.

Since 1596 the bitterest disputes had arisen between the two factions over the ownership of Church property. These resulted in two outbreaks of unrest in Minsk (1597, 1616), and the martyrdom of the Uniate Archbishop of Polacak Josaphat Kuncevič (1580-1623); they were finally settled at a conciliation meeting between the contending parties, held in Minsk in 1625. Both the Uniate Metropolitan Jazep Veniamin Rutski and the non-Uniate Metropolitan Peter Mohila attended the conference, which took place at a time when the Muscovite rulers, weakened by internal strife, driven back from Novgorod and Smalensk, and at odds with the Cossacks, were no longer in a position to interfere in the affairs of the Grand Duchy. Another Uniate *School of SS. Cosmo and Damian* opened in 1619. At this time also were built the Dominican monastery (1622), the Bernhardine convents (1628, 1642), and the Basilian Church of the Holy Ghost (1645), all in the Upper Town, as well as the Basilian convent of the Holy Trinity in Trinity suburb (1630). A privilege was also granted by the Grand Duke ŹładzisłaŹ I (*Pol.* IV.) in 1633 to the Basilian convent of the Holy Ghost and to the Orthodox Confraternity of SS. Peter and Paul, to establish printing presses; in the same year the increasingly wealthy Confraternity founded a *Hospital* and a *School* "for the instruction of Christians and their children". By the mid-17th century the non-Uniates of Minsk had seven Confraternities owning houses, shops and land; the majority of city churches and their endowments however remained in the hands of the Greek Catholics, secure from the Turkish Sultan and the Russian Tsar.

Thereafter Minsk enjoyed several decades of prosperity during which trade flourished. A number of Merchant corporations were established after 1552 - the Guild of *Metalworkers* (1591), the *Jewellers* (1592), the *Merchant Taylors* (1592), the *Shoemakers* (1609), the *Saddlers* (1622), the *Barbers* (1635), and the *Skinners* (1647). Other guilds included the *Tile-makers*, *Hatters*, *Cooks*, *Carpenters* and *Furriers*. Churches, town houses and public places were embellished, and culture generally (iconography, music, sculpture and the applied arts) reached high levels of achievement.



## *The Muscovite Wars and the Polish Ascendancy (1648-1700)*

In 1633 a Dutch founderer Witte established a cannon-factory at Tula, the first in the domains of Tsar Alexei Michailovič, thus finally breaking the arms embargo which the Empire, the Hansa and the Grand Duchy had sought to impose on their unruly eastern neighbour. This sounded the death knell of the peaceful interregnum enjoyed by Minsk since 1580. By 1648 the Muscovites had rearmed the Cossacks and in 1652 they were ready to resume hostilities against the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś. A host of 700.000 men, (as large as Napoleon's *Grande Armee*), embarked on a campaign equipped and financed - according to the Syrian eye-witness Paul of Aleppo - by the merchants of Moscow, grown enormously wealthy since the fall of Kazan and Astrakhan (1554, 1556) on "merchandise from Persia and India", and anxious further to enrich themselves by eliminating their Grand Ducal trading competitors between the Baltic and the Black Sea. The Moscow Patriarch Nikon added his widow's mite of 20.000 armed men, recruited from among his monastic servants, to join in the expedition. Smalensk fell after a short siege in 1654; Nicholas Radzivil and his captains were held prisoners in Kazan. The Belarusan fortress cities of Viciebsk, Mahilou, Polacak and Orša on the Dniapro were also taken in swift succession.

The account of the fall of Minsk among other cities, and the manner of the legendary "reunion of Belaruś with the Russian state" by Tsar Alexis, is best left to the contemporary Orthodox Deacon Paul of Aleppo, then in Moscow (1653-1655): "His various officers subdued upwards of ninety four towns and castles, by storm and voluntary surrender; killing God only knows how many Jews, Armenians and Poles, and throwing their children packed in barrels into the great River Dnieper without mercy; for nothing can exceed the hatred which the Muscovites bear to all classes of heretics and infidels. All the men without exception they cut to pieces, not sparing one: the women and children they carried into slavery, after destroying their habitations so as to leave their town entirely desolate. Thus the country of the Poles, which formerly was proverbially rich, and bore comparison with the finest provinces of Greece, now became a vast scene of ruin, where not a village or inhabitant was to be found in fifteen days journey in length and breadth, We were informed that more than one hundred thousand of the enemy were reduced to captivity, so that seven or eight boys and girls were sold for a dinar or less; and many of them we ourselves saw. In the towns which they



took by capitulation, they spared all those inhabitants and allowed them to remain, who embraced the faith and were baptised: the rest were all expelled. But the towns which they captured at the point of the sword they totally cleared of their inhabitants, and levelled their houses and fortifications to the ground." Other sources set the toll of ruined cities and towns in Belaruś between 1654 and 1656 at over two hundred.

Minsk on 30th June 1655 "readily surrendered to the Orthodox Tsar", and two Muscovite Princes, Arseniev and Chvorostin, were appointed as governors. The inhabitants were given the choice of "accepting Russian Orthodoxy (*pravoslavyje*) or of being removed from the city by order of the Tsar" The manner of their 'removal', whether by chain-gang or by river as described by Paul of Aleppo, needs no further elaboration. Subsequent exactions and ill-treatment of the population, however, moved the remaining Orthodox citizens to rebellion after two years, which was swiftly dealt with by the Muscovites. By 1660 however, the tide of war had changed. The Russian forces were overstretched and in 1661 Jan Casimir regained Horadnia and Vilnia after long sieges. The Cossack Ataman Zalatarenko was killed before Stary Bychoú, and Minsk was retaken. The citizenry of Mahiloú rose up to massacre the Muscovites, dispatching their leaders in chains to Warsaw. Recovery from the holocaust was slow, and only got under way in the latter part of the 18th century."The glorious city of Polacak" which, according to Vakar, "once had 100.000 inhabitants, and was larger and wealthier than London," had "only 360 frame houses, inhabited by 437 Christians and 478 Jews in 1780". In the latter stages of the war the fortunes of the Commonwealth improved, and Minsk again became an advanced camp for the liberation of Belaruś by the Grand Duke Jan Kasimir (1648-1668) who, together with the future sovereign Jan Sobieski, visited the ruined and plague-ridden city of Minsk on no fewer than three occasions in 1664.

Peace was restored by the Treaty of Andrussovo in 1667. Its terms, however, ultimately proved to be the death warrant of Belaruś as an independant state, for it contained a clause giving Moscow the right to intervene on behalf of the small Orthodox minority in the Grand Duchy and Poland, a right confirmed in 1686, and repeatedly and oppressively invoked by succeeding Russian ambassadors almost yearly thereafter. However, another three decades of peace ensured for Minsk a period of reconstruction and growing prosperity, with an increase in brick and stone-built houses, and in the embellishment of new churches. The convent of the Franciscans was restored in 1673 by the city *Stolnik* (High Steward), Todar Vankovič. In 1679 the privileges of the Jews of Minsk



were confirmed by the King and Grand Duke Jan Kazimier. The Calvinist chapel was also rebuilt in 1671, thanks to a gift of timber from Januš Radzivil, and the minister Kryštof z Žarnaúca, was relieved from holding his services in the open air. By 1680 however, his office had to be conducted with some circumspection, on occasion in a private house, to avoid molestation from rowdy pupils from the Jesuit school. Established in Minsk since 1654, that Order was richly endowed by benefactors after 1667, in particular by the *Vajavod* of Troki, Cypryjan Bržastoúski, whose family remained patrons of the Jesuit college for many years. Other benefactors included Stanislas Zablocki, Jan Filipovič and Jury Furs, who contributed gifts for the building of the new Church from 1701-1705. A Benedictine convent was later established in vul. Zbarovaja (*Internacyjanalnaja W.*) in 1700 by Anna Steckievič, widow of the Banneret of Minsk, and a Carmelite house was founded in the Rakoúski suburb by Todar Vankovič in 1703. In addition to the Church of the Holy Ghost on Cathedral square, the Uniates had at the end of the 18th century three other churches in the Lower market, at the southern end of the Tatar suburb and by the southern fortifications of the city, near the site later occupied by the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Cross and *Jubilejny Dom BNR*.

Fearful of further Russian claims on the Grand Duchy, official policy sought to integrate the Belarusan population into the Polish sphere by downgrading their institutions, including the Uniate Church, and smoothing out the differences between the Polish language and its Belarusan 'dialects'. In 1697 all official documents were required to be written not in the Cyrillic, but in the Latin script - *lacinka*. Even in some Uniate service books, prayers and hymns in Polish were introduced, often disguised in the old Slavonic script, the better to gain acceptance and promote the 'unification' of the Commonwealth. The policy was to some extent understandable in the face of continuing Russian encroachments, the more so because even ethnographers of Belarusan descent such as A. Rypinski, were unclear as to the true place of the Belarusan people between the Western and Eastern Slavs. Its effect however was dire for the future of the Belarusan language and culture.

### ***The Decline and Partitions (1700-1795)***

During the debilitating Northern wars (1700-1721) between the Commonwealth, Sweden and Russia, Minsk was twice occupied by the armies of Peter the Great, and once by Charles XII. During his first



visitation in 1704, Peter dined twice very civilly with the Jesuits and inspected his troops in the Upper Market; characteristically, however, during his second stay in 1708, his Cossacks and Kalmuks plundered the city, sparing neither Catholic nor Orthodox churches, and set it on fire.

With the return of peace, there was an improvement of communications. Roads and Canals were built: *postal services* were set up in Belaruś in 1717 between Vilnia, Minsk and Mahiloú, and between Minsk and Navahradak. The Dominicans established a school in 1727, and in 1752 a *Pan Šyška* founded a church of St. Roch in vul. Kojdanaúskaja (*Revalucyjnaja*). More *Guilds* were formed by Royal privilege in 1744 for the protection of local trade: - the *Vintners*, the *Gardeners*, the *Water-carriers*, the *Brewers* and *Meadmakers*. Occasionally conflicts of jurisdictions between the Municipal Courts, the Grand Ducal Court, the Church Courts and the Seignorial Courts-Leet in matters of breach of trade monopolies and unfair competition. Against a background of dynastic squabbles between the increasingly polonised Bykoúskis, Zavišas and Valadkovičy, rivalries between the various religious orders (including a famous street-fight in 1728 between the Dominicans and the Jesuits over some runaway schoolboys), processions, parades, street fairs with dancing bears and firework displays, the Grand Ducal era of Minsk teetered to its close. The city's great *Vajavod* and benefactor Ihnat Zaviša (whose portrait with the sitter, wearing the aristocratic sash or *pojas*, is to be seen in the National Museum of Art), died in 1739, and was laid to rest after a solemn Requiem at the Maryjnski Cathedral in a blaze of over 4.000 candles and 12.000 votive lights.

Periodic conflagrations (1737, 1764 and 1778), famines and outbreaks of the plague led to some reconstruction of Churches and houses in brick rather than wood, and also to the foundation of more hospitals. The great fire of 1737 resulted in the rebuilding of the two Bernhardine convents in the Upper Town (including the present Holy Ghost Cathedral); yet another outbreak in 1764 occasioned the rebuilding the Uniate Holy Trinity convent in *Traecki pradmiescie*. A conflagration in 1778 finally destroyed the old timber-frame castle within the earthworks by the Niamiha. An ever-increasing number of houses in the city were being built out of brick, many of which have survived, and in this respect Minsk was well in advance of Russian cities such as Moscow. By the mid-18th century Minsk had two benevolent hospitals. As for schools, in addition to fee-paying pupils, the Jesuit college admitted as scholars the children of poor families free of charge, until the suppression of the Order in 1773. Both the Basilians and the Dominican monasteries of-



ferred similar free educational facilities, and by 1771 there was also a Mariavitan school for girls in Trinity suburb.

Meanwhile the election of each new sovereign - Augustus II (1697-1733), Augustus III (1733-1763) and Stanislas Poniatowski (1764-1795) - and the escalating complaints of the non-Uniate Greek-rite minority, gave a pretext for foreign intervention. In 1733 Minsk was occupied by more than 20.000 Russian soldiers, cavalry and infantry under General Volkonsky, accompanied by the inevitable swarms of Cossacks and Kalmuks, though it is said that in the event they were on their best behaviour. Inevitably perhaps in these unsettled times, the Grand Duchy was plagued by bandits such as Adam Kroher whose raids sowed panic throughout Belaruś, until his capture and execution in 1737.

Ultimately the Commonwealth was dismembered by Russia, Prussia and Austria in three partitions. Polacak, Viciebsk and Mahiloú were annexed by Russia in 1773. A judicial re-organisation of the Grand Ducal Courts followed, resulting in the removal of the Sessions of the High Court from Minsk to Horadnia in 1775, but in 1791 the city became the seat of the Court of Appeal for the *Vajavodstvy* (Counties) of Polacak, Viciebsk and Minsk. Two years later in 1793, the city and the bulk of the remaining Belarusan part of the Grand Duchy were occupied by the Russians. A successful attempt had been made by the government of the Commonwealth to persuade the non-Uniate faction in Belaruś to leave the Russian jurisdiction for that of Constantinople. Although the Belarusan Orthodox had agreed to the reform, the Russian Empress Catherine would not hear of it, and seized on the move as a pretext to intervene definitively and extend her domains further to the west. By 1796 the whole ethnic territory of Belaruś had been absorbed in the Russian Empire, of which it was to remain a part for almost 120 years.

### ***Minsk under Russian Rule (1795-1917)***

The Russian Governors' first step was to restrict the Belarusan Greek-Catholic Church; the Basilian Convents in the Upper Town and in Trinity suburb were closed in 1795, and the Holy Ghost Church handed over to the Russian Orthodox hierarchy, who in 1796 renamed it after the apostles SS. Peter and Paul. The former Belarusan Orthodox church of that name on the Niamiha was re-consacrated to St. Catherine, thus commemorating the patrons of the two sovereigns who had established Russian rule over the city. Plans were then drawn up for improving the city's amenities; public gardens were laid out by the river Svislač, which were named the *Governor's Gardens*, and the architect Todar Kramer



was commissioned to remodel the City Guildhall, the Vice-governors residence (1800), the Basilian monastery, now a school for children of the gentry (1799), the Merchants' Exchange (1800), the Jesuit college and the Holy Trinity convent in the Trinity suburb (1799) and other buildings. These reconstructions were done to neutral neo-classical designs of West European municipal architecture, which left little room for national particularism.

In 1812 the French Emperor Napoleon crossed the Nioman river, making the purpose of his campaign against the Tsar plain to his generals. Irritated, after a meeting with Alexander's envoy, General Balachov, by the pretensions of successive Russian Tsars to make themselves the arbiters of European politics, he exclaimed to his generals Berthier, Caulaincourt and Duroc: "Alexander takes me for a fool. Does he think I have come to Vilnia to negotiate trade agreements? I have come to finish off, once and for all, this colossus of the barbarians of the North. The sword is drawn. They must be driven back to their ice-fields, so that for twenty five years they don't come meddling in the affairs of civilised Europe...He [*Alexander*] is afraid and wants a settlement, but I will only sign a peace treaty in Moscow...If he wants victories, let him beat the Persians, but let him not meddle with Europe. Civilisation repudiates these Norsemen. Europe must put its house in order without them." The composition of his confederate army - French, Poles, Italians, Germans, Dutchmen, Portuguese and Austrians - gave some weight to his claim to be acting for Europe. Napoleon, leaving Marshal Oudinot to hold Polacak, and Marshal Davout to occupy Minsk, drove on to Viciebsk. Only some 180,000 men set off from Smalensk for Moscow: the rest were protecting the *Grande Armée*'s flanks or were on garrison duty. Most of whatever material destruction took place during the campaign was caused by the brutal but very effective Russian tactics of "scorched earth" - burning cities (among them Mahilou and Smalensk), villages and crops to prevent them being taken by the enemies of the Orthodox Tsar.

In Minsk Davout received strong local support, and attended a *Te Deum* celebrated by Bishop Dederko to mark the liberation of the city from Russian rule. A popular move was the decree confiscating the harvests of the fleeing Russian nobility, and dividing them equally between the Army, the Civil administration and the peasants. Implementing Napoleon's plan to restore the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belarús as two separate states, with their capital in Vilnia and Mahilou, Minsk was made the *Prefecture* of a revolutionary *departement*, and numerous Belarusan volunteers formed units in the *Grande Armée*. During Napo-



leons retreat from Moscow, these volunteers fought with great valour, defending the bridges and covering the French crossings of the Biarazina. Allowing for the heavy losses sustained at Borodino and other engagements at Krasnaje, together with subsequent desertions of disaffected Germans and other allies, the arrival at the bridges of 70.000 men in combat order was hardly that of a defeated army. In the words of an old French soldier of the Imperial Guards who made it back to Vilnia: "We gave them a good trouncing at every turn, just the same. Those 'Russkis' are only a bunch of schoolboys." On the return of Kutuzov to Minsk in late November, there were few reprisals, with the exception of Bishop Dederka who was suspended, and a general amnesty was subsequently proclaimed.

Russian rule thereafter remained relatively mild, save for the suppression of the Greek-Catholic Church, until the Uprisings of 1831 and 1863. Then russification began in earnest, with Russian style churches being built in prominent positions, or existing churches being revamped in a sometimes grotesque pseudo-Russian style (*SS. Peter and Paul* prior to 1979). The national Uniate Church was suppressed in 1839, occasionally at sword point, with numerous recalcitrant priests being imprisoned or deported for up to thirty years. Many of the Latin clergy were expelled; the Berhardin convent and Church were given over to Russian Orthodox monks. The Dominican Church became an army warehouse, and the Berhardine Church of St Joseph a city archive. Streets were given different names in Russian to efface the memory of the old order: *vul. Franciškanskaja* became *Gubernatorskaja*, *Dominikanskaja* was renamed *Petrapaúláúskaja*, *Bernhardinski zavulak* - *Monastyrski*, *Felicijanskaja* - *Bogodelnaja*, *Mastovskaja* - *Paliciejskaja* and so on. An *ukaze* of Tsar Nicholas I. in 1840 abolished the very use of the names *Belaruś* and *Belarusans*. The consequences of Kastuś Kalinoŭski's uprising in 1863 were important and far reaching for the city of Minsk, and the surrounding areas. Many thousands of their inhabitants were deported to Siberia, or imprisoned - among them the poet Vikency Dunin-Marcinkievič, - in the Piščalaŭski Fortress, erected in 1825, almost in anticipation of future trouble.

Yet apart from these upheavals, a long period of peace brought with it material prosperity. Industry and the arts flourished, though occasional fires and epidemics continued to plague the city. There were two particularly virulent outbreaks of typhus in 1848 and 1853. The Tsars showed little interest in Minsk and seldom visited it, except on tours of inspection to the imperial army headquarters in Mahiloŭ. Alexander I came in 1819 to address the nobility, and Alexander II vis-





*Minsk, 1870.*

ited the city in 1859. Permission to build Catholic churches was generally limited to cemetery chapels, though exuberant Russian Churches and shrines such as the new *Cathedral*, the Church of the *Protection and the Holy Cross*, *St. Mary Magdalene*, *St. Alexander Nevski*, the Church of the *Transfiguration*, *Our Lady of Kazan* and others mushroomed across the city. The old coat-of-arms granted by Žyhimunt IV charged with the image of the Theotokos, which in 1796 had been augmented by the Russian double-headed eagle, was ultimately replaced in 1878 by a field "*or, three wavy bars azure*". Perhaps more relevant to the quality of life of the inhabitants was the installation of the municipal water system (1874), a telephone service (1890), two horse-drawn tram-lines (1892) and current electricity (1895).

However, all these attempts to suppress the language, the national *symbolica*, and to adulterate the visible signs of Belarusan individuality, finally brought growing numbers of Belarusians to the realisation that they were indeed a different nation. Ethnographical tradition engendered national pride, even as the nationalist poets Maxim Bahdanovič and Zmitrok Biadula were born, one of an eminent Minsk ethnographer, the other of a traditionally minded Hassidic Jew from the Lahojsk



hills. The unique flavour of Belarusian life was succinctly captured in works of one of Minsk's greatest residents, who now lies buried here, - Jakub Kolas. During this period Minsk acquired its *National Theatre* (1890), its first *School of Art* founded by Ja. Kruher (1906), the beginnings of its "Academy of Sciences" at the Belarusian *Chata* (1913) and proposals were also made in 1913 for the establishment of a *National University* in Minsk. Renewed stirrings of national protest came with the anti-Tsarist riots in 1905. There were strikes and demonstrations in Minsk, and the students at the Orthodox Seminary set fire to their college; as a result societies and clubs were dissolved, students expelled and the poets Jakub Kolas, Kastuś Kahaniec and Aleś Harun, among many others, were imprisoned for their clandestine activities.

### *Towards Independence (1917-1991)*

Later came the First World War and one of the most dramatic episodes in the city's history - the power-struggle between the Belarusian National Rada and the Bolsheviki from 1917-1919. On the national side stood such distinguished patriots as Professor E. Karski, General K. Alexejeŭski, Anton Luckievič, Edvard Vajnilovič, the poet Aleś Harun, Col. Kastuś Jezavitaŭ, Janka Kupala, Jazep Varonka, Count Skirmunt, Zmitrok Biadula, Princess Mahdalena Radzivil (the *Countess Markievicz* of Belaruś) and others, in particular the railway workers. The Bolshevik side were led by Russian internationalists and professional revolutionaries - Lander, Knorin and Miasnikian, - backed by mutinous but well armed Tsarist soldiers, who ultimately prevailed. Over the next twenty years, however, the bold ideals of the socialist revolution became stained with the blood of tens of thousands of victims, summarily shot by Bolshevik *črezvyčajniki* (Special units) in the 'killing-fields' of Golden Hill and Kurapaty. Many more starved to death in rural areas as a result of collectivisation of agricultural land, hastily introduced by the 9th All-Belarusian Soviet Congress held in Minsk (1929).

The arrival of the Germans in 1941, after the encirclement near Minsk by General von Bock of 300.000 Red Army soldiers with more than 300 tanks, brought more bloodshed, with the Nazi mass-murders. However, many Jews escaping death at the hands of the Nazis were sheltered and helped by the local populace. There followed more executions and mass-deportations by the Bolsheviki of so-called "collaborators". Yet some good came from all these ills: Eastern and Western Belaruś (formerly under Poland) were reunited in 1939. The Belarusian Repub-





*This is what Minsk was like after World War II (1944).*

lic was admitted as a founder member of the United Nations in 1946. The ruined city of Minsk was rebuilt as the show-place capital of a modern Republic, larger and more populous than Bulgaria, Denmark, Portugal or Hungary.

The awakening to nationhood in 1863 and 1904, the role played by the citizens of Minsk of every class in the creation of an independent Republic in 1918, and the subsequent destiny of the city as the cultural capital of Belaruś, rather than of some administrative area in a Marxist dreamworld, - all this cemented by years of strife, suffering and persecution during the Revolution and the Nazi-Soviet conflict (1941-1945), has helped to make Minsk a united city with a character very much of its own. Despite the destruction and thoughtlessness of planners, a great deal of the old Minsk has survived, and is being painstakingly restored. Neither were the visions of the totalitarian idealists entirely fruitless, as the fine avenues, squares, parks and impressive public buildings of the new Minsk demonstrate. These were the result of plans drawn up as long ago as 1926, which included the constructivist *art deco* of Government House (1934), the National Opera and Ballet (1939) and the Academy of Sciences (c.1935) by Ja. Langbard, and later in 1944 with the





impressive neo-classicism of the Congress Palace (1954), the Polytechnical Institute (1946), Victory Square (1954) and Skaryna Avenue. Industry, technology and the arts have made great strides, and the city now boasts two airports and a fine modern underground railway system. It has become an international city on the circuit of world statesmen.

But perhaps the greatest moments of Minsk have been in the recent past, when mass rallies in Independence Square, at the Kupala monument, in the City Sports Stadium and at Kurapaty, showed to the world that the 'forgotten people' had at last become a nation, with the crowds taking up the historic

*Memorial at the territory of Khatyn — one of the dozens of Belarusan villages burnt by fascists together with the residents during World War II.*

cry of the old peasant at the All-Belarusan Congress in 1917, as the elderly General Alexiejeúski, - a boy at the time of Kalinoúski's Uprising (1863), - kissed the white-red-white flag: "Long live free Belaruś! Long live the national flag!" Both old and new Minsk have their history and their achievements, which are there for citizen and visitor to enjoy. What has, like Dublin, become known as the *Kachany Horad* ("The dear old Town") on a Golden Hill, a city of icons resplendant with gold, in which filigree gates of gold are created out of something as commonplace, yet as rich as plaited straw, and where all the children seem to have golden hair, is surely a fitting capital for the land which poets have called "Belaruś, golden Belaruś".



### ***The Princes of Minsk (1066-1408)***

From 1066 until the death of Grand Duke Usiaslaú Bračyslavič the Enchanter, Minsk formed part of the ancient principality of Polacak. It flourished as a sovereign Principality after 1104, until c.1245 when, under Mindaúh, it became a Lithuanian Belarusan Grand Ducal apanage until 1413.

*Rahvalad of Polacak (980)*  
*Rahnieda, Princess of Polacak (989)*  
*Isiaslaú Uladzimieravič (d.1001)*  
*Usiaslaú I Isiaslavič (1001-1003)*  
*Bračaslaú Isiaslavič (1003-1044)*  
*Usiaslaú II Bračaslavič (1044-1101)*  
*Hleb Usiaslavič (1104-1119)*  
*Rascislaú Hlebavič (1119-1151)*  
*Valadar Hlebavič (1151-1158)*  
*Vasilka Valadaravič (1158-1195)*  
*Erdzivil (c1220)*  
*Todar Sviataslavič (1326)*  
*Jaúnut Hedyminavič (1345)*  
*Michajla Jaúnutavič (1386)*  
*Urutaj (1408)*

After the Union of Horadlo (1413) with the Kingdom of Poland, Minsk became a direct Suzerainty of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania and Belaruś under the hereditary Princes of Zaslaúje until 1569 of which:

*Bohdan Zaslaúski (1514)*  
*Ivan Krasny*  
*Mikalaj Iljinič*  
*Michajla Zaslaúski (1519)*

### ***Grand Dukes of Lithuania and Belaruś, Suzerains of Minsk. (1330-1569)***

*Mindaúh Rynholdavič (1220-1263)*  
*Vajšelka (1264-1265, 1269-1271)*  
*Švarna (1265-1269)*  
*Trojdzien (1271-1282)*  
*Lutaver (1282-1295)*  
*Vicien (1293-1316)*  
*Hedymin (1316-1341)*  
*Alhierd Hedyminovič (1330-1381)*  
*Jahajla (1381-1386)*  
*Kazimier I Skirhajla (1387-1392)*



*Alaksandar I Vitaút (1392-1430)*  
*Svidryhajla (1430-1432)*  
*Žyhimont I Kejstutovič (1432-1440)*  
*Kazimier II Jahajlavič (1440-1492)*  
*Aleksandar II Jahajlavič (1492-1506)*  
*Žyhimont II Stary (1506-1548)*  
*Žyhimont III Aúhust (1530-1572)*

## ***Grand Dukes of Lithuania and Belaruś, Kings of Poland (1569-1795)***

*Henri de Valois (1573-1574)*  
*Sciapan Batura (Batory) (1576-1586)*  
*Žyhimont IV Vasa (1586-1632)*  
*Uladzislau I (Pol. IV) (1632-1648)*  
*Jan Kazimier (1648-1668)*  
*Michal Viśniavecki (1669-1673)*  
*Jan Sabieski (1674-1696)*  
*Aúhust II (1697-1733)*  
*Aúhust III (1733-1763)*  
*Stanislaú Aúhust IV Poniatowski (1764-1795)*

From 1796 until 1917 Belaruś was annexed to the domains of the Russian Tsars of the Romanov dynasty.

## ***Vajavody (High Constables) of Minsk (1569-1796)***

After 1499 the civic authority in Minsk was exercised under the Magdeburg Statute by a Corporation of 12 *Radcy* or Councillors and two *Burmistry* or Burgomasters, one of Greek rite and one of Latin, elected from among their number. The Royal Courts sat under the *Starosta* or Lord-lieutenant, whilst the municipal Magistrate's Court was presided over by a *Vojt* (Mayor) assisted by a number of *Laúniki* (Aldermen) In 1503 the *Vojt* of Minsk was one Jan Navakreščany.

With the Union of Lublin and the Establishment of a united Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusan state, Minsk became a standard *Vajavodstva* of the Commonwealth, equal in status with all the other provinces, under a *Vajavod* or High Constable, and subject to the successive Grand Dukes of Lithuania and Belaruś and Kings of Poland

*Haúryla Harnastaj (1569). (Arms: Centaurus)*  
*Andrej Sapieha (1577) (Arms: Lis)*  
*Mikalaj Sapieha (1588) (Arms: Lis)*  
*Bohdan Sapieha (1591) (Arms: Lis)*  
*Jan Abramovič (1596) (Arms: Abramovič)*  
*Andrej Zaviša (1599) (Arms: Labiedz)*



*Jan Pać (1615) (Arms: Hadzava)*  
*Bohdan Sapieha (1616) (Arms: Lis)*  
*Mikalaj Sapieha (1617) (Arms: Lis)*  
*Piotra Tyškievič (1620) (Arms: Leliva)*  
*Baltazar Stravinski (1633) (Arms: Doliva)*  
*Alaksandar Sluška (1634) (Arms: Astoja)*  
*Mikalaj Sapieha (1638) (Arms: Lis)*  
*Alaksandar Masalski (1641) (Arms: Mahila)*  
*Alaksandar Ahinski (1648) (Arms: Brama)*  
*Symon Sanhuška (c.1650) (Arms: Pahonia)*  
*Kryštof Rudomina (1656) (Arms: Truby)*  
*Stanislaú Rajecki (c.1660) (Arms: Labiedz)*  
*Kazimier Bielazor (1669) (Arms: Vienava)*  
*Jan Zaviša (1674) (Arms: Labiedz)*  
*Michał Siasicki (1690) (Arms: Centaurus)*  
*Uładzislau Sapieha (1699) (Arms: Lis)*  
*Kryštof Zianovič (Arms: Zianovič)*  
*Uładzislau Sapieha (Arms: Lis)*  
*Kryštof Zaviša (1721) (Arms: Labiedz)*  
*Ihnat Zaviša (1739) (Arms: Labiedz)*  
*Jan Žaba (1748) (Arms: Kascieša)*  
*Jan Hilcen (1757) (Arms: unknown)*  
*Jazep Radzivil (1783) (Arms: Truby)*  
*Adam Chmara (c.1790) (Arms: unknown)*

### ***Castellans (Governors of the Castle) of Minsk (1569-1793)***

*Mikola Talvaš (1569) (Arms: Labiedz)*  
*Jan Chlabovič (1576) (Arms: Leliva)*  
*Paviel Pac (1587) (Arms: Hazdava)*  
*Marcin Stravinski (1597) (Arms: Daliva)*  
*Mikalaj Haraburda (1613) (Arms: Abdank)*  
*Symon Vojna (c.1618) (Arms: Truby)*  
*Alaksandar Sluška (1623) (Arms: Astoja)*  
*Andrej Zaviša (1629) (Arms: Labiedz)*  
*Jan Alfons Lacki (1634) (Arms: Lacki)*  
*Hedejon Rajecki (1638) (Arms: Labiedz)*  
*Jaústafy Kiardziej (Arms: Bielty)*  
*Mikola Čartaryski (1658) (Arms: Čartaryski)*  
*čiapán Kiandziaržaŭski (1661) (Arms: Navina)*  
*čiapán Rusiecki (1671) (Arms: Ravič)*  
*N. Vyhoŭski (Arms: Abdank)*  
*Hiaranyŭ Kiardziej (Arms: Jadzieška)*  
*N. Lubiecki (Arms: Drucki)*  
*Andrej Puzyna (Arms: Brama)*  
*N. Ščuka (1703) (Arms: Hrabie)*  
*Jan Sapieha (1712) (Arms: Lis)*  
*Danił Vyhoŭski (Arms: Abdank)*  
*N. Jazafovič (Arms: Leliva)*  
*Michał Judycki (1741) (Arms: Radvan)*



*Jan Judycki (1758) (Arms: Radvan)*  
*Michal Rakicki (1778)*  
*Adam Chmara (1783)*  
*Symon Zabiela.*

The above Lists of Civic and Military appointments for Minsk were compiled by K. Niesiecki and Kajalovič from the Grand Ducal records. Dates relate to mentions in the official Rolls. Lists for lesser Grand Ducal civic officials such as - *Maršalki* (Earls Marshal), *Padkamory* (Chamberlains), *Starasty Haradavy* (Lords Lieutenant), *Civuny* (Deputy Lieutenants), *Charuży* (Bannarets), *Stolniki* (High Stewards), *Kaniušy* (Masters of the Horse), *Lasničy* (Verderers Royal) *Miačniki* (Sword-Bearers) and *Loučy* (Masters of the Hunt) are not yet available.

All the higher officials were of Belarusan or Lithuanian stock, appointed from an aristocracy which in 1880 was said still as to 70% to have commonly conversed at home in the Belarusan language. No Polish families are mentioned as holding office, although the Polish language was widely used in official communications and socially.

The incomplete nature of the lists in the 18th century reflect the breakdown in civil administration caused by the massive depopulation of Belaruś during the Russian invasions of 1648-1667.

### ***Minsk City Government in the 19th and 20th Centuries***

After the second Partition of the Grand Duchy in 1793, Minsk became the capital of a province of the Russian Empire and later of the "North Western Region", under Tsarist Governors. The latter included Ivan Neplueff (1793-1796); Zachary Kornejeff (1796-1806); Herman von Roding (1806-1812); Pavel Dobrynski (1812-1817); Vicenty Hiačevič (1817-1831); Alexander von Drebusch (1831-1835), Sergej Davidoff (1835-1839); Nikolai Sushkoff (1839-1841); Gustav Dopelmeyer (1842-1844); Alexei Semionoff (1844-1850); General Sergej Kherkheulidzeff (1850); Faddej Shkliarevitch (1850-1857); Ivan Rosset (1857-1858); Count Edward Keller (1858-1862); Andrei Kozhevnikoff (1862-1864); Pavel Schelgunoff (1864-1868); Egor Kasinoff (1868-1869); Nikolai Tokareff (1869-1875); Valerii Tcharikoff (1875-1879), Alexander Petroff (1880) and amongst others Prince Trubetskoy (1890) and Hirse (1914). Other Russian officials included a Military Governor and a Government-Marshal.

Since the establishment of the Belarusan Soviet Republic in 1921 the city of Minsk has been governed by a City Council (*Harkom*), from City Hall (1963) in Independence Square.



## **SOME PLACES OF INTEREST**

The first place of interest is the old town of San Juan, which was founded in 1548. It is a beautiful town, with many fine buildings and a large cathedral. The second place is the old town of Santa Fe, which was founded in 1541. It is a beautiful town, with many fine buildings and a large cathedral. The third place is the old town of Albuquerque, which was founded in 1541. It is a beautiful town, with many fine buildings and a large cathedral. The fourth place is the old town of Santa Fe, which was founded in 1541. It is a beautiful town, with many fine buildings and a large cathedral. The fifth place is the old town of Albuquerque, which was founded in 1541. It is a beautiful town, with many fine buildings and a large cathedral.

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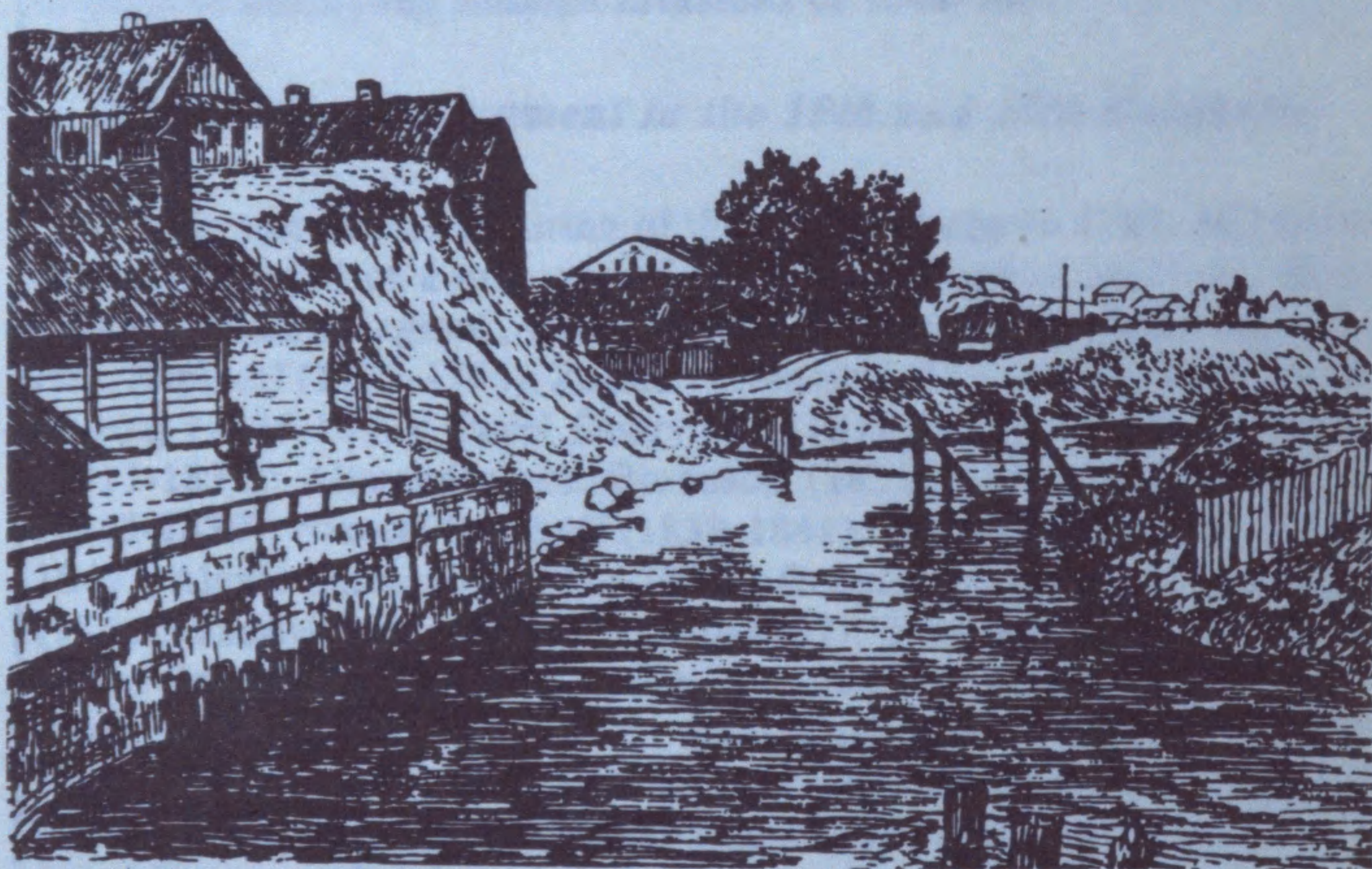


*(Note: Street names are for reference purposes given in the traditional and present-day form).*

## The Svislač and the Lower Town. (Walkabout No. 1)

*Svislač and Niamiha rivers - The Tatar suburb - The Ghetto Memorial - Hotel Jubiliejny - Park Peramohi - Parkovy Mahistral (Pr. Mašerava) - The Lower Market, - Greek Cathedral and Castle - vul. Zamkovaja - Rakouški suburb\*\* - vul. Astroúskaha - vul. Uvaskrasienskaja - Church of SS. Peter and Paul \*\* - Kalvaryja Church and graveyard\*.*

The first settlement in Minsk was located on two areas of high ground at the confluence of the river Svislač and its tributary the Niamiha. The Svislač watershed fed the river which rises between *Mount Kojdan* and *Lysa Hora* (Bald Mountain.) and was the beginning of a



*The Nyamiega mouth, Minsk, 17th century. Pict. by Ya.Drozdovich.*

waterway linking the upper reaches of the Nioman and the Baltic with the southward flowing Bierazina and Dniapro to Kiev, the Black Sea and Constantinople. It also sustains a flourishing brewing industry for



which the Belarusan capital is renowned. Its waters were reputed to be stocked with excellent sturgeon, carp, and other fresh-water fish; its waters, deep in places, drove a number of watermills, including the historic Plebany mill. In 1793 the river was crossed by three wooden bridges; by 1858 there were seven, and in 1898 there were no fewer than nine, including a pontoon bridge, the New Bridge and the Plebanski Bridge linking the Lower Town to the Trinity suburb on the left bank. Since 1946 a number of these have been replaced by attractively designed stone bridges.

The Svislač river passes through the heart of Minsk, and since its banks were landscaped and laid out with gardens in the 1950s, a boat trip from the historic *Tatar village* district in the north, past the white Churches and leafy lanes of the Upper Town, the romantic spires and colonnades of vul. Špitalnaja to the Nižny Lachoŭski Bridge, would perhaps be the best way of viewing the sights of Minsk both old and new. The riverway however is interrupted by weirs and watermills which limit navigation even by small boats.

Little remains of the old but reputedly prosperous Minsk **Tatar suburb** and mosque, save fragments of tiles, pottery, coins and the occasional street name ( *Vialikaja Tatarskaja* ), though the settlement here as residents of friendly auxiliaries or captives dates back to the 15th century. The Crimean Tatar, or more correctly Seldjuk Turkic presence accentuates the city's character as a meeting place of the cultures of the Baltic and Black Sea regions. The settlers soon adopted the Belarusan language as their own, whilst retaining Arabic and Turkic for liturgical purposes; in some spiritual writings in the Belarusan language, Arabic characters are occasionally used. The popular dish of *kalduny* (stuffed dumplings) is thought to be of Tatar origin, and variants are found throughout Central Asia (*pelmeny*, *manty*), Tibet (*momo*), China (*chiao-tze*) and Japan (*gyo-za*). Turkic sweetmeats such as *Baursak* and *Halma* are also appreciated. Tatar artisans were noted for their skill in tanning, leather-work and horticulture. Their names and heraldry remained distinctive. The death of a Tatar nobleman Bohuš Soltanavič was recorded in Minsk in 1593; and later in 1854 the *mulla* of Minsk, Ibrahim Rajecki registered his family arms at the Imperial heraldic office in St. Petersburg.

Something of the life of the Belarusan Tatars emerges from contemporary Law Reports: In 1593 two carters, Jurka Achmetovič and Mikalaj Jakušovic, having delivered merchandise to one Ivan Baburka of Minsk (later a City Burgomaster), Achmetovič complained that on his return he was unlawfully stopped, and imprisoned in chains without



cause for a night and a day by two burghers of Minsk, Siamon Savič and Andrej Kakoúka, before being released. Another Tatar, Milkuman Starynák, sued in the Minsk County Court in 1590 for relief against Prince Chasien Bahdanovič and his men who, "having barred me from my passage on the free highway, outside my own gate, on my own land, for no reason whatsoever, began to pull me by the hair on my forehead and to strike me with a stick, and when my wife Saltana Skidyroúna, having heard the affray, ran out to my assistance, the said Chasien, as if beating me was not enough, hit my wife Saltana in the face with his fist, so that she began to bleed." Generally, however, the Tatars remained a peaceable nation.

In 1617 the Tatar *Starosta* Sulejman acquired from the Uniate monastery of the Resurrection formerly situate in the vul. Uvaskrasenskaja ceratin water-meadows by the Svislač river and a site on which to build a new wooden. Mosque at the northern end of the vul. Bolšaja Tatarskaja. Coming at a time when the Grand Duke was attempting to seize the non Uniate Church of SS Peter and Paul recently built in the adjacent Rakoúski suburb, the gesture was an insensitive, and caused great resentment in the city. The old Mosque was a wooden structure with an interior divided into two parts, the menfolk sitting apart from the women. There was no decoration beyond the green draped *pulpit* for the mulla and the *mihrab* recess directed towards Mecca. At the end of the 19th century there were in Minsk still some 1.300 inhabitants of Tatar Muslim descent, and family names of Ablamovič, Davidovič, Paútarycki, Synkievič, and Šmajkievič are still to be met with in the city. Bekir Smolski, a fellow of the Belarusan Academy of Sciences, and the well-known writer Sciapan Chusein Alexandrovič are two present day Tatars who have achieved distinction in the cultural field. There is an '*Al Kitab*' Association of Tatars, having as its emblem the national white-red-white flag with a white crescent moon and star on the central red stripe. Of particular interest is the Muslim Belarusan language journal *Bajram*, devoted to Tatar history and culture, which began to appear in Minsk in 1991. A late 18th century Tatar *Kitab* ("Book") records in Belarusan-Tatar dialect the pithy sayings of Sufic sages, including that of Šeich Abdul Chešen Nuri on the soul-searching question that *Pan Boh* ("The Lord God") will put to believers on Judgment Day: "*I chalope, ja biv is taboj; a ti, s k'im biv?*" ("Hey, my servant, I have always been with you; with whom have you been?").

The rather plain neo-classical *Mosque* (1903), which replaced earlier places of worship dating back to 1617 and even to the 15th century, together with most of the relatively prosperous Tatar houses, were swept



away to open up the old Parkavy Mahistral as a new and bustling thoroughfare, and its site is now occupied by the tower block of the Hotel *Jubilejny*. And indeed the Hotel is an ideal place to commence a visit of the Svislač and the Lower Town, after a hearty Belarusian breakfast in its cosmopolitan restaurant. On leaving the Hotel, turn left and cross the Mahistral to reach the **Victory Park** (*Park Peramohi*), occupying a spacious area of 100 hectares, with more than 33.000 trees, numerous bushes and fine views across the river to the *Hotel Belaruś*, and the new high-rise buildings on vul. Staražoúskaja. Not without interest is an old 19th century *manufactory* on the opposite river bank adjacent to *Staraja Slabada*, in the vicinity of the famous Lekkert "*Bohemia*" brewery, originally founded in vul. Staražoúskaja in 1894 by Count K. Čapski. The recently restored Russian Orthodox **St. Mary Magdalene Church** (1847) in the vul. Staražoúskaja (*Astroúskaha*), with its gilt and blue onion domes, adds an exotic touch to the view of the left-bank.

A short walk along vul. Zaslaúskaja leads to the site of the *Jama* or gully in the former **Ghetto**, created by the Germans in July 1941 within the already predominantly Jewish area enclosed by the Parkavy Mahistral, vul. Niamiha, vul. Nova-Ramanaúskaja and the old Tatar quarter. Here in the summer of 1941 special Nazi units murdered more than 5.000 Jews, some of whom were shot dead, but most being simply buried alive, the bloodstained earth above them heaving for hours after the event. A particularly eerie visitor to view the killing-fields of Minsk in mid-August 1941 was the erstwhile chicken-farmer SS-Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler, who himself ordered and uneasily witnessed the shooting of 100 Jews. He left Minsk suggesting, as a 'humane' way of alleviating the 'sufferings' of the city's lunatics, the tossing into their cells of sticks of dynamite. The results were described by a death-squad commander as "woeful". Not a few Germans, including the General Commissioner Wilhelm Kube himself, are said to have been revolted by, and protested against, the barbaric treatment of the Jews. A plain **Jewish Memorial** to the Ghetto victims, with an inscription in Hebrew letters, was erected in 1972 by private subscription, to mark the place of their martyrdom. Returning to the Park a modern **Obelisk** (1985) 45 meters high, on the right bank of the Svislač, commemorates the heroic history of Minsk over the centuries, with a bronze statue representing the motherland as a symbol of victory and glory.

The **Parkavy Mahistral** \* (*Praspekt Mašerava*) was developed during the 1960s as a main shopping and recreational area, linking the North-western suburbs and the attractions of *Ždanovičy Spa* and *Lake Zaslaú* with the city centre. Proceeding from north to south, two large



modern hotels, the *Planeta* (1975) (no. 31) and the *Jubilejnaja* (1968) (no. 19) are popular with foreign tourists on account of their accessibility and facilities (*restaurants, bars, foreign exchange, tourist bureaux and taxis*) The spacious restaurant of the latter with its dinner-dances and cosmopolitan clientele attracts theatre-goers as well as private parties at the end of an outing or family celebration. Behind the second Hotel lies the dominating tower-block of the Trades Union (*Prasajuzny*) Building (1978).

Further south towards the Lower market there are two noteworthy buildings on the left - the **Palać Sportu** (1961-66), a functional steel and concrete structure with an inclined façade of twelve strut-shaped



*Palace of Sports.*

columns, housing a spacious auditorium, ice-rink facilities, gymnasia and offices - with further on a rectangular **Drill Hall** or *Dom Physkultury* in the Roman classical style, with triangular pediments resting on pilasters dating from the early part of the present century. On the right hand side of the *Mahistral* is an ensemble of offices and department stores offering a welcome choice of shopping - the hard-currency "*Biarozka*" liquor-store and adjacent "*Svietač*" bookshop (no. 11), the



poorly-lit but well-stocked *patisserie* "Romaška", with nearby the cheerful "Bistro" wine and *kanapki* (open-sandwich) bar (no. 7), the "Alesia" ladies-wear store (no. 3), publishing houses ("Polymia", "Mastackaja Litaratura", "Belaruś", "Vyšejšaja Škola") and various information offices. Two buildings stand out from this essentially functional ensemble: the top-heavy "Maskva" cinema theatre (no. 13), built in 1980 in the Soviet modernist style with a podium and projecting balustrade, its central panel of continuous glazing, having above it a sequence of three massive telescoping roof-pediments ornamented with some 15 candelabra-like lights in coloured glass, is at least entertainingly *gauche*; on the other hand, the "Dom madelej" (no. 4), with its massive moulded bas-relief of soldiers, workers and banners, does little to alleviate the monotony of the long drawn-out, slab-like façades of low grade blocks. However, an attractive group of bronze statues - the *Dance of the Four Seasons* (1982) by A. Davydenka, A. Šaternik, Ju. Palakaŭ and V. Zankovič - seems through the muddle to capture the essence of the *Mahistral* and its riverside Park as a popular centre for relaxation and entertainment.

Buried beneath the roadworks and landscaping of the *Plac 8-ha Sakavika* lies the oldest part of the city of Minsk, enclosed within the loop of the now subterranean river Niamiha, - the area covered by the former **Lower Market**, vul. Ekaterinskaja, Miasnickaja, Zavalnaja and Nova-Miasnickaja. Here stood the old *Castle* until its final destruction during the conflagration of 1778, together with an ancient Byzantine *Church* with foundations of stone dating from the 12th century. The latter consisted of the usual narthex, central cupola resting on four columns, and a semi-circular sanctuary. The body of this church, which stood on the east side of the Castle, was timber-built, and perished in one of the fires which periodically ravaged the city. Another *Church* in the Lower Town, dedicated to the *Dormition of the Theotokos*, was the shrine of the miraculous *Icon of Our Lady of Minsk*, until it was transferred to the Upper Town by Metropolitan Rahoza in 1616. Other ancient Greek-rite churches in the Lower Town - St Nicholas, SS. Cosmo and Damian, the Resurrection, the Transfiguration, St. Euphrosyne, to name but some, as well as a number of later Latin-rite *Bonifratian*, *Franciscan* and *Carmelite* convents were destroyed or made redundant. The street-names which commemorated these shrines have been discarded in favour of political or internationalist fads. Historic *synagogues* also and prayer-houses (including the saucer-domed, oddly-named 17th-c. *Cold synagogue*, the oldest in Minsk in vul. Školnaja, now *Praspekt Mašerava*) have disappeared without trace. Excavations have, however,



revealed a number of interesting mediaeval artefacts\* - piles, wooden floors, tiles, ceramics, coins, items of jewelry, medallions, votive crosses and a fine bronze plaque depicting SS. Nicholas and Stephen, which are on display in Minsk at the *Historical Institute* of the Belarusan Academy of Sciences and in the *National Museum of Belarus*. Part of the excavated site is preserved in the area adjacent to the Svislač Gardens *Drill Hall*. In addition to some fragments of ruins, the old Castle is still commemorated in the street name of *vul. Zamkavaja*.

Although much of the old Lower Town has been destroyed by war and development, something of the atmosphere survives in the sepia shaded postcards from the turn of the century showing the narrow street and crowded *bazary* (markets) of yesteryear - the Lower Market near the old castle earthworks, the fish-market by the Church of SS. \ Peter and Paul and the hay-market just across the river in Trinity suburb. The 19th century historian Pavol Špileúski has left a Dickensian description of his boyhood wanderings in the 1830s among the grubby but cheerful stalls on market-days - Fridays, Sundays and Mondays, but not on Saturdays when the Shabbas was Queen, -. Here were stalls selling all kinds of bread, grains, pulses, herbs and leaves or flowers for *tisanes*, tobacco leaves and Minsk cigars. Here pig-eating Christians could buy slabs of butter-soft hogslard, stuffed *salcison* (Haggis) and sausages of wonderful flavour. Here the Jews came to buy and sell fresh goats cheese, pickled and chopped herrings, with pike and carp for Saturday lunch, "for without fish shabbas is not shabbas". The invalid selling *kartoflanki*, (potato cakes with poppyseed), the old woman dispensing hot pies stuffed with cabbage and Abraham, the bearded vendor of *abaranki* (bagels) and seed rolls were Pavol's good friends. At *Smačny kutok* ("the Tasty corner") a schoolboy could buy a bowl of *krupnik* (barley broth), a slice of salt beef, a plate of *kalduny* (stuffed dumplings) with a cut of ox-liver for little more than a couple of pence And so on all the way from *vul. Zamkovaja* to the Svislač bridge. The location may have vanished today, but the sights and atmosphere may be still be savoured across the river in the remarkable *Kamarouka* open market on Trinity Hill.

A few years ago one of the oldest remaining streets in Minsk, *vul. Niamiha*, was largely destroyed in a thoughtless road-widening scheme, and the whole area has been disfigured by the erection of a low-grade apartment tower-block development. Fortunately the historic confraternity Church of SS Peter and Paul\*\* survives, and its exterior has been restored. Known as the "Yellow Church" on account of its yellow and white stucco walls, it dates from 1613, making it the oldest surviving church in Minsk. Built in the reign of Grand Duke Žyhimund.



IV (*Pol.* III), during the Vajavodship of Jan Pać, the diplomat Mikola Haraburda being then Castellan of Minsk, the church as it now appears in something approaching its original form, has had a chequered history, involving changes of name as well as extensive rebuilding. The original structure was built in the Belarusan Renaissance style with Gothic elements, to serve the Orthodox confraternity and school, set up in 1612 under the aegis of the prestigious *Confraternity of the Holy Ghost* in Vilnia. This occurred at a time when the majority of Greek-rite Christians were inclined to accept the formal Union of Brest (1596), preferring obedience to the First Rome, rather than to a Second Rome - Constantinople - in the hands of the infidel Turks, or to the 'Third Rome' and the power of the encroaching Muscovite Tsars.

Some of the townsfolk of Minsk however, led by the monk Todor Jarmolič, were attached to the old ways and protested against the Union, demanding the right to a church and confraternity school of their own Constantinopolitan obedience, which they duly paid for and built. It was very properly pointed out that since the Tatars were allowed to have their mosque, it was unfair to refuse the request of the Orthodox. According to Syrakomla, Jarmolič courageously voiced his protests again in 1620, at the Council of Greek-rite Churchmen, presided over by Metropolitan Rutski in Minsk, and began to harangue the townspeople. The Metropolitan tried to silence him, but the protestors and the Confraternity students vigorously supported Todor, and led him back in triumph to their school.

The Church of *SS. Peter and Paul*, together with the other Orthodox churches in Minsk, were looted in 1707 by Tsar Peter the Great's Cossacks and Kalmuks who, finding nothing left by the Russian troopers to plunder in the Catholic and Uniate Churches, promptly turned on their sovereign's co-religionaries. The Orthodox confraternity of Minsk had to distribute arms to the faithful to defend their churches, and as Ul. Arlou puts it: "There was another battle on the Niamiha".

In 1795, after the annexation of Belarús by the Russian Empress Catherine the Great, the Church was reconsecrated to her patron saint to avoid confusion with the renamed Cathedral of *SS Peter and Paul* in the Upper Town. Following on the Kalinoúski uprising of 1863, the church was hideously russified in a style completely out of character with the Renaissance original. Here, on his return to Minsk after the War in 1919, an early exponent of Belarusan Church music Mikola Ravienski conducted the choir. His best known compositions for the Holy Liturgy (*Cherubicon, Canon, Hymn to the Theotokos, Creed, The Lord's prayer*) and Vespers were, however, written in 1943, in his nearby na-



tive town of Červien, where his father had once worked as a gardener.

The west front of the restored Church (1979) is flanked by two square-based towers, with linking cornices running the width of the façade at first floor and roof level. The central portal is set in a recess the upper part of which is a blind arch; two low ground-level blind arches are surmounted by rounded windows. Above the first floor cornice over the portal is a large depressed-arch window flanked by two lower and two smaller upper sunken rectangular panels. A steep triangular pediment above the roof-level cornice surmounts the projecting central portico. Above the ground-level lateral rounded windows are two matching blind arches on the first-floor level. The two lateral towers are pierced by asymmetrically placed rounded or squared window apertures with blind arches and sunken panels. Below the roof cornice are two symmetrically placed cruciform windows in a circular roundel, and at belfry level each tower is pierced by four arched apertures. Each culminates in a four-faceted ogee dome, a finial spire and cross.

The side aisles are each lit with three pairs of round-arched windows between four plain pilasters, the same pattern being repeated in the clerestory windows. There is a round arched window at the east end of each aisle, and a central porthole window set in the pediment of the the east front. The sanctuary is also lit by three elongated round-arch windows. None of these, or indeed the rib-vaulted roof, are visible since the Church has for some decades been divided into floors to provide floor and wall-space for the storing of archives.

The restoration of the church to its original design took from 1972 to 1979, the building having in 1870-1875 been reconstructed after the 1863 national Uprising to conform to the canonicity of the Russian Orthodox church, and its preoccupation with the imposition of uniformly oriental onion-domes to mark out the Imperial domains. The result was an ill-favoured hybrid, which has since been stripped of these accretions. During the Nazi-Soviet conflict it was reopened for worship after the departure of the Bolsheviks. The incumbent, the well-known Belarusan preacher Fr. Ivan Balaj, provided for the restoration by the Moldavian-born iconographer. Hauryjl Vjer of the miraculous icon of the Minsk Theotokos. The church was again closed in 1944 after the return of the Red Army, and what became of the reputedly fine iconostasis, also the work of Vjer, is not known. In 1992 after Independence, the Church was again re-opened for public worship. Pending restoration of the interior with its attractive rib-vaulting, a temporary chapel has been installed, in which Greek-rite services are occasionally celebrated in the Belarusan language by Fr. Jury Latuška.



Adjacent to the Yellow Church are five streets - vul. Zamkovaja, vul. Rakoúskaja (*Astroúskaha*), vul. Viciebskaja, vul. Stara-Tatarskaja (*Dzimitrava*) and the L-shaped vul. Úvaskrasenskaja (*Vyzvalennja*), - which since the demolition of vul. Niamiha contain the bulk of the surviving dwelling houses of the Lower Town. The vul. Rakoúskaja, from which the area derives its traditional name of **Rakoúski suburb\*** (*Rakoúskaje Pradmiescie*), leads westward into the vul. Úvaskrasenskaja towards the small town of Rakoú from which it takes its name. It contains three separate groups of *merchant houses* on opposite sides of the road (nos. 12-20, 15-19 and 24-32), erected during the 19th and early 20th centuries, but unfortunately overshadowed by high-rise blocks. In the first group a fine stucco and brick building (no. 12), with a centrally placed portal and built on two floors with six and ten segmentally arched windows, is divided by an ogee moulded intermediate cornice. A second upper level cornice beneath a hipped roof has dentil ornamentation. A walled courtyard with an entrance portal and narrower side-door divides it from a smaller house (no. 14) with five ground floor segmentally arched windows, intermediate cornice and four plain rectangular windows. Its distinctive feature is a first floor French window opening onto a small railed balcony. A further short wall with recessed panels links it with a turn of the century red-brick house of similar but asymmetrical pattern (no. 16) with segmentally arched windows on both floors and the traditional diminutive railed central balcony. The next house (no. 18) of the same period and style serves as a National Industrial Computer centre. The last of the group (no. 20) standing at the corner of vul. Úvaskrasenskaja is terraced with the previous building, and is of similar date but of distinctive appearance being built of red brick and decorated with two rectangular pediments, ornamental cornices and arched ground-floor windows as well as a central balcony. A number of these houses have annexes in their inner courtyards, either of timber or of mixed building materials.

On the opposite side of the street is a terrace of stuccoed **Merchant houses\*** of more imposing appearance. The first (no. 15) dates from the mid 19th century; it has an intermediate as well as a roof-level cornice, dividing a lower asymmetrical fenestration and central entrance from an upper horizontal row of seven windows with slightly projecting lintels. A pleasant 18th century former *synagogue\** (no. 17) has a central entrance bay, flanked by two vertical round-arched windows on either side between plain pilasters; each arch has a simple stucco key-stone with a fielded panel beneath each sill. Above a roof-level entablature and cornice is a rectangular gable, with four small attic windows



between plain pilasters. At the turn of the present century the building served as a dance hall, and later as a cinema. A third building (no. 19), repeats the dual cornice motif dividing two horizontal rows of plain segmentally arched windows with matching projecting lintels on the lower floor and similar straight fascia-moulded lintels on the upper. Another group of five two-storied houses (nos. 24, 26, 28, 30, and 32) further along vul. Rakoúskaja, variously constructed of red-brick or stucco. Built in the 19th century these modest apartment houses with their inner courtyards follow the local pattern of extended façades, double cornices, arched porticos, squared and segmentally arched windows, matching lintels and attractive small, wrought-iron balconies. The street ends in the *Plac Jubilejny*, so named to mark the Jubilee 1.500th anniversary of the Council of Niceaea, proclaimed by Pope Leo XII in 1825. A simple tubular iron cross on a short stucco pillar set on a plinth was erected here to mark the anniversary. This undistinguished monument was cleared by the Bolsheviki, and today only the name survives to mark the site.

The irregularly V-shaped vul. Úvaskrasenskaja (*Vyzvalennia*) links vul. Rakoúskaja with vul. **Zamkovaja** at its apex. The street contains a fine terrace of six substantial, late 19th century *Burgher houses* \* on two or three floors, with extended façades and intermediate cornices, all built of stucco or brick (nos. 3, 5, 7\*, 9, 11\* and 13). Two of the buildings have ornamental balconies, and one (no. 13) a porch with a moulded pediment. On the opposite side of the street is a three-storied period brick-built house (no. 6), with a courtyard annexe constructed of timber.

The name of vul. *Zamkovaja* commemorates the timber-built mediaeval castle of Minsk which stood on the steep rise or **Zamčyšča** ("Castle hill") overlooking the Niamiha river until it was destroyed by fire in 1778. Here from the Middle Ages were located the *City Law Courts* to which cases were referred and formal applications made: "In the Grand Ducal Court holden in the Castle of Mensk, before the Deputy Lord-Lieutenant (*Pad-starosta*) of Mensk", as the old registers of writs for 1582-1590 specify. The garrulous Belarusan diarist Todar Jeúlašéúski records how he appeared as an attorney in the Minsk Court, during the Session of 1583. Here also was the official timber-framed single storey residence of the Lord-Lieutenant (*Starosta*). The Grand Duke Alexander Jahajlavič, a benefactor of the city, was a visitor there in 1502, and was received at the Castle. Žyhimunt II (*Pol. I*) stayed in Minsk after its destruction by the Tatars in 1503, and again in 1514 when he arrived with his whole Court from Vilnia, following the loss of Smalensk to the



Muscovites. Here the Grand Duke established his headquarters to direct the campaign, which culminated in the victory of his Grand Hetman Kanstancin Astrožski at Orša. Žyhimunt III (*Pol.* II) is also reputed to have resided in the Castle in 1568 during his campaigns against Ivan the Terrible. Tolstoy records that in 1697 the *Starosta* in residence was "Pan Zaviša" - Kryštaf (1666-1721), a distinguished member of one of the hereditary ruling families of Minsk. Other noblemen of that time however, such as Sapieha and Hlabovič, already occupied more substantial mansions, "there being not a few stone-built edifices in Minsk". Stone in this context, of course, includes brick. Sketches of the castle ruins made by Ja. Drazdovič in the 1920s are preserved in the *Belarusan Museum of Art*.

The street retains a few typical mid- and late-19th century terraced houses (nos. 25, 27 and 29) with pitched roofs and plain façades on two floors, with intermediate cornices. They are built of brick and pastel-shaded stucco-work, with a ground floor entrance and plain horizontal fenestration of five or six windows and projecting lintels on the upper floor. Access is usually by an entrance situated in the centre of the ground floor or to the side, sometimes with fewer or no street level windows. It is noteworthy that the façades of Belarusan town houses tend to be extended in relation to their height. Another dwelling house (no. 31), built of brick on two stories at the turn of the present century, has in addition to intermediate and upper cornices and a pitched roof, a strip of moulded ornamentation and an arched entrance gate. Returning by way of the vul. Rakoúskaha, noting two old houses (nos. 8 and 10) on the left in vul. *Viciebskaja*, and crossing vul. Niamiha, the visitor may embark on a visit of the Upper town, starting from the northern end of vul. Felicijanskaja (*Kamsamolskaja*).

Alternatively, time permitting, the visitor may revert to Plac Jubilejny and by bus or on foot follow the vul. Kalvaryjskaja (*Apanskaha*) to the **Calvary Church and Gateway** \* adjacent to the historic cemetery of that name. The Gateway was built of stuccoed brick in 1830 in the classical form of a triumphal arch, comprising a central rounded arc and archivolt, with two lateral archways ornamented with voussoirs. An intermediate cornice divides a lower rusticated level from a plain upper level, in which the archivolt is flanked by two quasi-heraldic moulded trophies of banners and military weapons, with a crowning dentilled cornice, parapet and *cymatium*. All three archways are furnished with highly decorative, period *Wrought-iron gates* \*. The *Calvary Church* was built in 1839 in a style perhaps best described as "Prairie Gothic". The main body of the Church consists of a pitched roof nave and chancel lit



by six lancet windows, and two diminutive transepts. The walls are of cream-coloured stucco with archivolt, window surrounds, cornices and friezes of red brick. The two-tiered tower has an ogival entrance portal surmounted by an inscribed tablet and a triangular arched window. The upper tier has a plain pitched roof and double lancet windows, with above them a circular *oeil de boeuf* window. The interior of the nave is barrel vaulted and there is a choir gallery over the entrance; the orientation of the altar towards the west may have borne some special significance for the erstwhile polonised clergy. The walls are hung with a number of baroque-style religious oil-paintings.

In the cemetery are interred the remains of two historic Minsk residents - the painter *Jan Damel* (1780-1840), and the poet *Janka Lučyna Niasluchoŭski* (1851-1897). Damel is remembered for his historical paintings: "The Baptism of the Slavs", "The death of Hlinski in captivity", "Napoleons Army in front of Vilnia Town Hall", his landscapes of the country-side round Minsk, where he settled in 1822 - "The Water Mill", "Trees by the water", his portraits of Belarusan noblemen - Prince D. Radzivil, I. Chraptovič, K. Tyškievič and the Governor of Minsk V. Hiecievič - as well as his religious paintings: "The Virgin and Child", "The denial of St. Peter" and "Christ carrying the Cross". According to Syrakomla a picture of *Christ* painted by Damel used to hang in the old Calvary Church. Janka Lučyna was born in Minsk into a family of lawyers, and after completing his education at the Minsk Lycee and the University of St. Petersburg, he was employed in the technical offices of the Libava-Romny Railway Company. His collected Belarusan poems were published posthumously in 1903, and are generally of a didactic nature. A nice poem about Janka, the poverty-struck, day-dreaming carter of fire-wood, whose horse automatically stops outside a tavern, but at which his driver can no longer call for a drink, as his credit with the inn-keeper is exhausted, rambles philosophically on: "No time for stopping, / Lets get home, for stars are shining".

## The Upper Town\*\*\* - (Walkabout No. 2)

*Perambulation of the West side - vul. Niamiha - vul. Felicyjanskaja (Kamsamolskaja) - vul. Kojdanaŭskaja - vul. Nova-Ramanaŭskaja (Revalucyjnaja) - vul. Zboraŭskaja (Internacyjanalnaja) - Hotel "Soutine" - vul. Felicyjanskaja - vul. Kojdanaŭskaja - Plač Katedralny - Dom Inbelkulta - the Jesuit Church - City Mansion - Merchants Exchange - The City Hall - Cathedral of the Holy Ghost - Bernhardine Convent - St. Joseph's Church - Bernhardine Friary - the Vilenčuki - The East side - vul. Mala-*



*Bernhardinskaja - vul. Bernardinskaja - zav. Seminarski - Masonic Hall - Basilian Monastery - The Conservatoire - vul. Daminikanskaja - Sapieha Mansion - vul. Valočkaja - Maniuška House - Subscription library - the Vankovič house - vul. Zybickaja (Handlovaja)*

Leaving the vul. Niamiha, proceed up vul. Felicijanskaja (*Kamsamolskaja*): the road slopes up to the **West side \*** of the Upper town, past a stylish three floored merchant house on the left with two decorated intermediate cornices and a central segmentally arched pediment at roof level (no. 6). On the right are three 19th century town houses. The first (no. 5) is a three-storied pitched roof building on three floors with a large side entrance onto the street, surmounted by a small ornamental balcony. The second is a two-storied, long-fronted merchant house (no. 7), with an intermediate cornice, plain pilasters and framed second floor windows with sills, and an asymmetrical ground floor entrance between two shop-fronts. A wider gateway leads to the inner court-yard. The third is an L-shaped corner-site, one-storied building (no. 9) with a hipped roof and simple rectilinear fenestration, reminiscent of the traditional single-floored wooden houses of the outer suburbs and country areas. A right turn brings the visitor into **vul. Kojdanaúskaja W.\*** (*Revalucyjnaja*), a street which has changed little, and which retains a high proportion of traditional old town houses. Already in the 16th century it was one of the principal streets of the city, but was then almost entirely timber-built. The present stuccoed buildings date from the 18th to the early 20th century and open up a perspective eastward, onto the historic *City Exchange* in Cathedral Square. The block between vul. Felicyjanskaja and vul. Nova-Ramanaúskaja (*Respublikanskaja*) are two and three storied town houses of a late-classical 19th century style. The first is a traditional long-fronted house with a decorative intermediate cornice and second floor windows with segmentally arched lintels and two small balconies (no. 22); it formerly housed the *Hotel Livadia*. A substantial three-floored *apartment residence* (no. 24)\* has a central arched entrance portal, leading to an interior courtyard; over the arch is a first floor balcony. The slightly projecting portico section has grouped triple windows with a single moulded lintel on the first floor; the upper fenestration is of segmentally arched windows, extending to the two lateral sections of the façade, which each have a small second-floor wrought-iron balcony. There are two intermediate, and one decorative roof-level cornices. The inner courtyard contains two traditional longfronted annexe buildings (nos. 24a. and 24b.) with small balconies, segmentally arched lintels and decorative crowning cornices. The other



three buildings in the block (nos, 26, 28 and 32) are similar in style and decoration; the middle house is the erstwhile *Hotel Kupecskaja*.

On the opposite side of the western end of vul. Kojdanaúskaja (*Revalucyjnaja*) are four substantial Merchant houses, three of which are on three floors. The first of these (no. 11), a brick-built 19th century house with a pitched roof and centrally placed round-arched entrance, now used as a workshop for woollen-ware, was formerly the *Hotel Nova-Varšava*. Two further houses, also with pitched roofs and intermediate cornices between floors, have rectangular alternating with segmentally arched windows and moulded horizontal or segmental lintels; both are now used as offices (nos. 13 and 15). The next house in the row is of similar period style, built of stucco on two-floors (no. 17), and the end house (no. 19) is another substantial 19th century block on three floors with a pitched roof and an inner courtyard. From 1925 until 1928, it served as the headquarters of the **Belarusan Institute of Culture\*\*** (*Inbelkult*) during the most fruitful period of its existence. This organisation grew out of the coordinating bodies of specialised Belarusan cultural associations and study groups formerly centred on the pre-1914 *Belaruskaja Chatka* and the *Jubilejny Dom* off the main vul. Zacharava. Among the Institute's founders were the distinguished Belarusan Academician and Slavist Jaúchim Karski (1861-1931) - "the father of Belarusan linguistics", Professor Branislaú Epimach-Sypila (1859-1934), Professor Ul. Pičeta, later the First Rector of the Belarusan National University and the scholar Jazep Dyla (1880-1973) who chaired the opening session of the All-Belarusan Congress in December 1917. The Institute began with two sections: Humanities, with commissions on lexicography, terminology and literary research, and a Natural History section. In 1924 it established a Central Office of topography, producing its own journal *Naš Kraj* ("Our Country"). By 1927 the Institute was beginning to assume the form of an Academy of Sciences with its two sections - Humanities, and Natural and Agricultural studies, - both publishing annual reports of their *Zapiski* ("Proceedings"). There were chairs of History of the Belarusan Language and of Contemporary Belarusan, History of Belarusan Literature, General History, History of Belaruś, History of Belarusan Law, History of National economics, Archeology, Ethnography, Botany, Zoology, Geography, Chemistry, Anthropology, and Biology; there were also Institutes of Art and Geology. Among other commissions were those relating to Jewish, Latvian and Polish studies.

In 1928 there were 115 on the teaching staff, including the leading specialists in their field - Janka Kupala and Jakub Kolas (*Literature*),



A. Hryniewiĉ (1877-1937) (*Music*), M. Šĉakacichin (1896-1940) (*Fine arts*), M. Ravienski (1886-1953) (*Ethnography*) and many others. On 13th October 1928 the Institute was reorganised as the *Academy of Sciences* of the Belarusian Republic. Among its numerous publications from the vul. Kojdanaŭskaja had been a "Belarusian-Russian Dictionary" (1925), "Four hundred years of Belarusian printing" (1926), Piatuchoviĉ's "Historical outline of Belarusian Literature" (1928), Šĉakacichin's "Outline of the History of Belarusian Art" (1928), and "Belarusian Archives" in two volumes (1927-1928). In no uncertain sense this 18th century building in the very heart of old Minsk had become the birthplace of the systematic study and revival of the national culture of Belaruś. Since 1928 the academy has occupied Langbard's impressive building on Skaryna Avenue. The old premises now serve temporarily as a police court *Prokuratura* (Prosecution department) for the so-called *Frunze* suburb.

Turn left up vul. **Nova-Ramanaŭskaja** (*Respublikanskaja*), passing the rectangular former headquarters of the *Minsk Fire-fighting Association*, built in 1885 of red-brick on three floors with the traditional intermediate cornices (no. 4). The association was founded in 1876 by subscribing members to protect their property from out-breaks of fire. In 1885 there were 140 men, 16 horses, 4 handpumps, 8 water-cistern wagons as well as extending ladders. In addition to fire-fighting, the association gave valued assistance in saving parts of the city from damage during the floods of the river Svislaĉ in 1906 and 1917. A nearby three-storied residential house (no. 6) of the same period is of simple appearance, without any kind of decorative features.

Another left turn brings the visitor into, vul. **Zbarovaja\*** (*Preabrazĭenskaja, Internacyjanalnaja W.*), a further historic thoroughfare of the Upper Town, with buildings dating from the 18th to the early 20th centuries. The plain appearance of their long façades evokes the quiet streets of an Irish country town; their present dowdy state fails to do justice to their charm and their often well-kept garden courtyards, which the sympathetic restoration of the Left Bank has brought out so well in the buildings of the old Trinity suburb. According to Kapyski, the area was inhabited by Calvinist craftsmen, who built eight dwelling houses as well as a Chapel (*Zbor*), from which the street takes its name. Founded in 1583, the congregation was endowed with a gift of land by two brothers Kandrát and Michal Šyška, who were masters of the Goldsmiths Guild. On the left side of the street are a couple of 19th century two-level houses with pitched roofs, the first (no. 5) with a symmetrical pilastered front and lintelled windows, the second (no. 7\*) with Ionic



pilasters on the second level and a decorative balcony. To the right are two other low-fronted period buildings (nos. 4 and 6) with plain façades, rectangular fenestration and the traditional intermediate cornice. The two adjoining houses (nos. 8 and 10) have somewhat more elaborate fronts with plain ground-floor fenestration, saving a round-arched entrance, intermediate cornices with stucco lintels, sill-panels, moulded box frames round the second level windows and a central small wrought iron balcony. Two three-storied houses with plain façades (nos. 12 and 14) comprising intermediate cornices, rectangular fenestration and small balconies, adjoin a more interesting *art-nouveau* façade with steep pointed central and two side gables, three wrought iron balconies, and segmented *voussoirs* round the ground level windows (no 16)\*. Built in 1913 as a hotel, of which there were not a few in the area, it now serves as offices. A smaller two-floored house (no. 18) with intermediate and crowning cornices, plain rectangular windows and a small wrought iron balcony completes the block. Continuing eastward three houses (nos. 9, 11 and 13) on the left or northern pavement are noteworthy. The long frontage of the **Hotel and Restaurant Soutine \*** (no. 11) with its alternating pairs of round- and segmentally-arched windows, and ornamental roof-level cornice, was established in about 1886 and, though run-down is still in use as the cafe *Otdych - Apačynak*. It is the oldest surviving restaurant in Minsk, and was said by the Russian surveyor A. Subbotin (1888) to excel the hotels of Imperial St. Petersburg and Moscow in comfort and west European standards. Some of the original fittings and stained glass still subsist.

On the opposite side of the road two modern buildings, which now house the Minsk City and the Republican *Prakuratury* (Public Prosecutors offices), occupy the site of the former onion-domed *Praabražensky* (Transfiguration) convent Church, built in the mid-19th century during the period of the 'russification' of the city after the uprisings of 1831 and 1863, on the site of the earlier Benedictine convent (17th c.). Under the Bolsheviks it was used as a sports club following the eviction of the nuns, but under German occupation in 1942 it became one of the three churches reopened for public worship. The convent housed a restored community of nuns under their energetic Superior, Mother Antanina with the maverick Fr. Úl. Finkoúski as their chaplain. Here in 1941 Dr Nadzia Abramava founded the *SBM* (League of Belarusan Youth) which did much to restore to the young a sense of national identity under German occupation. The church later served as the pro-Cathedral of the *Belarusan Autocephalic Orthodox Church\**, after its restoration in a Synod held here between 30th August and 2nd September 1942 under



Metropolitan Pancialejman and Archbishop Filafiej, in a courageous attempt to break free from the domination of the Moscow Patriarchal Church. The wish to restore the independent Greek-rite Church, which had flourished in the 14th and 15th centuries, was a recurring phenomenon of the life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś, and had been forcefully reasserted by Archbishop Valaam Šyśacki of Mahiloú in 1812, as well as by Metropolitan Melchisedek Pajeúski and the martyred bishops Ioann of Mazyr, Mikalaj of Slucak and Philaret of Babrujsk in 1922. Also on the south side of the street the small neo-classical **Pieramoha Theatre\*** in the Louis XVIth style has a pillared portico, dentilled crowning cornice and parapet, with two lower projecting side wings and plain pilasters (no. 20). This attractive stucco ensemble was erected in 1947 to a classical design by the versatile Langbard, architect of the constructivist Academy of Sciences and the Opera-house.

Returning to the intersection of vul. Zbarovaja and vul. **Felicyjanskaja** (*Kamsamolskaja*), follow the latter street back to vul. Kojdanaúskaja, noting in passing on the right the corner-site period house (no. 17). The next two-floored building is square-shaped in plan with an intermediate cornice, decorative moulded lintels on the second level, a pediment and dormer windows. It adjoins two handsome mid-19th century apartment blocks (nos. 13 and 11) with intermediate and roof-level cornices, moulded sills and lintels; the northernmost building (no. 11) was formerly the *Hotel Drejcer*.

The intersection of vul. Felicyjanskaja with vul. **Kojdanaúskaja** E \* (*Revalucyjnaja*) formerly marked the corner site of the Church of St Roch, endowed in 1752 by a member of the Belarusan aristocratic Šyška family. It was rebuilt in 1833 as a boarding school for poor children under the Russian Governor Semionoff. Turning right, a terrace of varied and picturesque houses (nos. 14, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4 and 2), leads along to Cathedral Square and the *City Exchange* building. An attractive symmetrical merchant house (no 14) with a central entrance has a row of six segmentally-arched second level windows and a double French window leading onto an attractive wrought iron balcony. A simple rectangular two-level building with a workshop (no. 12) faces a picturesque neo-classical front across an alleyway with intermediate cornice, triangular gable-pediment and a lunule attic window (no. 10). A substantial mid-19th century four-storied building, now an office, with an entablature and dentilled cornice between the third and fourth levels (no. 8), has a façade ornamented with vertical plain pilasters, stylised capitals, and plain rectangular fenestration on the 1st, 2nd and 4th floors; the third floor has alternating rectangular and round-arched windows. A



couple of period long-fronted two-level buildings (nos. 6 and 4) repeat the traditional pattern of plain rectangular ground floor fenestration, intermediate cornice, and more elaborate second floor windows. The upper-floor fenestration of the second building (no. 4) has alternating triangular lintel pediments, and dormer windows. On the opposite side of the street is another classical style three-storied period house, now used as offices (no. 3), with a symmetrical façade and an entrance flanked by decorative columns.

The largest and oldest building in vul. Kojdanaúskaja, standing at the corner of Cathedral Square, is a classical P-shaped building on three floors, flanked by lateral wings with four floors, surmounted by two triangular pediments facing onto the side street. Built in the second half of the 18th century of stucco and brick, it was restructured at the end of the following century for use as a *Seminary* for priests. After 1918 it served episodically under the Bolsheviks as a Commissariat for Education until 1922, when for a time it became the headquarters of the Institute of Belarusan Culture (*Inbelkult*) prior to its removal to the western end of the street (no. 19) in 1925.

Among the most distinctive features of the old Minsk skyline, were the twin towers of the Roman Catholic *Cathedral* of Our Lady (*Frauenkirche, Marijnski Sabor*), formerly the **Jesuit church\*\*** of Jesus, SS. Mary and Barbara. Traditional Belarusan folklore from the Minsk region bears witness to the popularity of this local saint: "A golden star has risen from out the blue sea, / The sun has clothed all the East in precious robes / And scattered glittering gems across the azure heavens. / But this is no golden star, / It is the holy Barbara." (*rec.* A. Bahdanovič, 1891). The fine ensemble of the church, college, residency and belfry was for years a favourite subject for local artists and Napoleon Orda, Jazep Drazdovič, N. Varonaú, S. Ramanaú and V. Staščeniuk amongst others have succeeded in evoking its imposing elegance.

As elsewhere in Europe, the Jesuits had played a crucial part in the Counter-Reformation in Belaruś, particulaly in the advancement of education, where their colleges in Vilnia and Polacak founded in the 16th century rapidly achieved éminence. They were established in Minsk by the mid-17th century, when in 1654 Prince Hieranyim Sanhuška, Bishop of Smalensk (d. 1657) and kinsman of the then *Vajavod* (High Constable) of Minsk, Symon Sanhuška, bought the stone-built mansion of a wealthy burgher Jahor Heher for 8.000 zlotys, and donated it to the Order. The property included a wooden dwelling house, with a courtyard, stables, brew-house and other outbuildings. The main Church was constructed at the commencement of the 18th century, the foundations



having been started in 1700, the outside completed in 1705 and the interior in 1708. On the 16th March 1710 the Church was solemnly consecrated by Kanstancy Bržastoúski, Bishop of Vilna. There was a visitation on this occasion by the generals of the erratic Russian Tsar Peter I. - Sheremetieff, Guntheim, Bruce, Holtz and Volkonsky - who were campaigning in the area during the labyrinthine Northern Wars. After the ceremony, the visitors were entertained at a lavish banquet during which, although it was Lent, the Bishop had to join willy-nilly in a carousal with the Russian soldiery. In 1713 Kryštaf Zaviša gave the relics of St. Felicijan the Martyr, which he had received from Rome, to the Church; there they were solemnly installed to the accompaniment of singing, sermons, allegorical tableaux, processions and all the usual trappings of Jesuit ceremonies. In the following year the Minsk House was elevated to the rank of a College, with the Bishop of Vilnia's brother Antoni Bržastoúski as its first Rector.

A sacristy was completed in 1720 and a chantry chapel dedicated to St. Felician added in 1722, in which was set the tomb of the founder, Kryštaf Zaviša (1666-1721) sometime *Vajavod* of Minsk. St. Felicijan was a major patron saint of the Belarusan capital. A second lateral chapel is devoted to the Holy Trinity. Twin baroque bell-towers were added to the façade of the Church in 1732 "one of which serves to summon the people, the other... to show the hour and day, so that the time may always be known". They contained four bells, two in each tower, which according to the custom of the times were given names: *Kazimir*, *Tadevuš*, *Felicijan* and the largest *Jakub*, weighing 5.5 tons. With its two-storied residency and low squared tower, topped by a gilt weather-vane of *St. George and the Dragon* to the south facing Cathedral Square, together with the new college (1738-1747), its inner courtyard and its lofty belfry (1750) surmounted by an octagonal baroque onion-dome and lantern, the Minsk Jesuit College occupied the whole block between vul. Zbarovaja and vul. Kajdanava facing onto *Cathedral Square*. The college itself was damaged by fire in 1797 but its restoration by the Belarusan architect Todar Kramer was completed by 1800.

The Church itself takes the form of a basilica with a narthex, nave, side aisles and choir, and the high altar facing westward. In its later form the east front comprised a flat-roofed portico with a balcony raised on four corinthian columns, having a central gateway and two rectangular lateral windows. On a second level of the façade, a segmental pediment with a small inset window, rests on a cornice and two sets of twin attached columns, flanking a large centrally placed, segmentally arched window. On the third level a rounded central window, flanked by pilas-



ters topped with finials, were set into an arched gable with concave buttresses. The lateral belfries are elevated on the two remaining levels divided by a cornice, to form a single unit with the central portico, the lower level having two superimposed circular windows, and the second level a central, concave arched niche, with above it a recessed panel. Thereafter the squared towers rose in three stepback tiers, with lateral pilasters, finials on small pedestals at each corner of the dividing cornice, and a central arch at each tier, culminating in a square lantern with oval lucarne apertures and an octagonal ogee-curved dome. Each tower was surmounted by an orb and cross.

Ionic pilasters with carved capitals of gilded wood decorate the interior of the nave with cornices, plain friezes and architraves, surmounted by a narrow gallery with open wrought-iron railings. A number of the vaults and recessed panels were adorned with frescoes of New Testament scenes, the work of the 18th-century Minsk artist *Kazimir Antażeŭski*. There were also a number of original religious paintings including works by Š. Čachovič and I. Aleškievič. The interior was refurbished in 1798-1800 after the annexation of Belaruś to the Russian Empire and the suppression of the Society of Jesus. It then became the Cathedral of the newly established Catholic Bishopric of Minsk (1793), the city having previously formed part of the diocese of Mahiloŭ. The first ordinary *Jakub Dederka*, a former Canon of Vilnia, was assisted after 1805 by a French suffragan Bishop Mgr. Maselet.

After the entry into Minsk of Napoleon's *Grande Armee*, both Dederka and the Orthodox Metropolitan of Mahiloŭ Valaam Šyŭacki rallied to the French Emperor, and the former on the 19th July 1812 publicly proclaimed in Minsk Cathedral his adherence to the "Minsk Confederation", repudiating the authority of the Tsar. Each prelate celebrated a solemn service of Thanksgiving to mark the liberation of Belaruś from Russian rule. A French Army captain Henri de Brandt described the scene: "In the Cathedral of Minsk they sang a *Te Deum* for the liberation of *Lithuania* in the presence of the civil and military authorities, representatives of various regiments and so on. General Grouchy [*later Marshal, of Waterloo fame*] in ceremonial dress took the collection in Church, with one of the most eminent ladies of the town. During the ceremony, word was brought that several dragoons had broken into and looted a number of shops, as if they had just taken the city by storm. The Marshal [*Davout*] instantly dispatched his aides de camp; the looters were arrested, court-martialled and shot the following day". Archbishop Syŭacki ordered the clergy of his Metropolitan See to delete the name of *Alexander I* from the prayers of the Liturgy.



substituting the name of Napoleon, and sought to set up a Belarusan Orthodox Church independent of the Russian Holy Synod. After the retreat from Moscow, Metropolitan Valaam was by order of the Tsar tried, and shortly afterwards died in confinement. Dederka was deprived of his See of Minsk, and in 1816 transferred to Olyca near Troki, where he died in 1829.

The **Residency** served to accommodate a number of distinguished visitors, in particular *Charles XII* King of Sweden, the Ukrainian Hetman *Mazeppa* and the legendary, carousing *Peter I* of Russia stayed there during the Northern Wars of 1700-1721. According to Vakar, in 1706 Tsar Peter ordered the city to be burnt for having received his enemy the King of Sweden, a fate shared by the city of Viciebsk. The French Marshal Louis Davout, *Prince d'Eckmuhl*, made it his headquarters on his arrival in Minsk in 1812, and rode out from the courtyard to hold parades and inspections of select units of the *Grande Armee* in the Cathedral Square. The Marshal, angered by the conduct of one of the German regiments in General Compans' division, decimated by desertions before a shot had been fired in the entire campaign, reprimanded them in public during a general review on 12th July, and rather harshly ordered the rest of the regiment to march past in dishonour, with their fire-arms reversed. Napoleon also decreed that the Minsk district should form a *departement* of a restored Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and a French officer of Polish extraction, General Bronikowski was duly appointed as its first *Prefet*. An official government printing house was also set up in the city. His plan included the creation of a separate Belarusan state, with its capital in Mahilou and extending eastwards beyond Smalensk.

Taken over by the Russian authorities after the dissolution of the Jesuit Order, the building served ordinarily as the gubernatorial residence and as administrative offices, a function it retained until 1917. From here the Tsarist Governors A. von Drebusch and Gen. Schelgunoff directed operations against the national Uprisings of 1831 and 1863 and the subsequent hunting down of insurgents. Tsar Nicholas II was received by the Governor, the Municipal corporation and clergy of Minsk in the Upper Town during his Tour of military Inspection in October 1914.

The Governor's Residency also played its part in the struggle for national Independence. After the seizure by the military units of the Belarusan Rada ("Council") in rapid succession of the former Bolshevik headquarters in the Hotel Europa, the Central Telephone exchange and the Arsenal, the Governors Office was in turn occupied on behalf of the Belarusan National Republic by Colonel Kastus Jezavitaŭ at 10 pm.



on 19th February 1918. "The entire Residence, he recorded, had been taken over, the [Red] Guards had been removed, and machine guns had been installed on the balcony and in the square... A light pre-dawn wind was gently stirring the two Belarusian flags flying from the balcony of the former Governors Residence. In the clearing twilight I could distinctly read on one of the flags the proud motto: 'Long live Free Belaruś'".

The old Jesuit *College* had been opened as a school for boys in 1682, and provided courses in rhetoric, poetry, syntax and grammar. Other subjects were later added to the curriculum - theology, Hebrew, ethics, mathematics, physics, logic and metaphysics. Theatrical performances were also a feature of school life. Syrakomla tells how in 1727 a number of their pupils absconded to the nearby Dominican convent. When they failed to return after several demands, the Jesuits resolved to use force. "One fine evening the Dominicans were returning from Vespers at the Benedictine convent, together with the runaway scholars. At that moment a number of students emerged from the Jesuit college and grabbed their former class-mates. The Dominicans began to cry for help; some townfolk came to their aid, a fight started, and staves were used. The runaways were taken back, but the next day the Dominicans laid a complaint before Bishop Brzastoński, who at that time happened to be in Minsk." A face-saving solution was reached, in which the parties made a public apology in the Dominican Church, and the runaways were returned to their former school, without punishment or reprisal.

In 1728 to mark the canonisation in Rome of two members of their Society, Stanislaŭ Kostka and Aloysius Gonzago, the Jesuits organised a festival to the playing of bands and the firing of canon, brought in specially from the garrison town of Slucak for the occasion. After solemn Vespers, celebrated by Bishop Brzastoński of Vilnia, the statues of the newly canonised Saints were carried in solemn torch-lit procession through the city. The celebration continued for three days, with daily canon salutes and the firing of small-arms in the Upper Market, further processions through the streets, and sermons in the brightly candle-lit Cathedral.

After the dissolution of the Order in 1773, the college was converted to use as a secular school. From 1852-1917 part of the building adjacent to the college bell-tower was occupied by the city Exchequer Court. For a time in 1918-1919 it was used successively as administrative offices by the Rada of the BNR and by the Soviets. Later it became the seat of the Bolshevik Party, the Presidium of the city council.



and the Belarusan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, until the completion of Langbard's Government House in 1934. Two Belarusan activists A. Čarviakoú and Zm. Žylunovič (the writer Ciška Hartny) joined the Soviets, and for a time both worked here. It was Hartny who persuaded the Bolsheviks to set up a Belarusan Soviet Republic in 1919, in order to satisfy the growing national aspirations of the populace.

The *Marijnski Cathedral*, by the end of the 19th century, appears to have been in poor condition and cluttered with polonised 'bondieuseries', though it survived both World Wars without having suffered irreparable damage, until 1951. Then in the course of municipal redevelopment of the vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*), the Jesuit college itself, its picturesque belfry, and the historic Governor's residency were demolished. The façade of the Cathedral was remodelled to accommodate the road-widening scheme, and the top three tiers of the famous bell-towers were shorn off, to align the whole with the neighbouring buildings. The main body of the Cathedral was spared, though a certain number of interior structural alterations were carried out, and the building was for many years used as a gymnasium by the "Spartak" sporting club. In 1983 a Government plan was drawn up for the restoration of the Cathedral, but it was not until 1992 that the building was returned to the Roman Catholic community for use as a place of public worship. The Residency and the College sites at the corner of vul. Kajdanoúskaja are now occupied by four-storied blocks, constructed in the post-war period by German prisoners of war in a picturesquely grandiose style reminiscent of the eccentric King Ludwig of Bavaria's Munich. They now house offices and the Union of Belarusan composers.

In the years of the so-called *Belle-epoque* before the First World War, at no. 13 of the then Cathedral Square, the aptly named *Bacchus* wine-cellar offered its French, Spanish and other "Wines, Brandies, Liqueurs, Champagnes and selected Vodkas" to the discriminating connoisseur. Indeed, the whole heart of the Upper town was then well-endowed with comfortable hotels, restaurants, cafes and bars, - "Soutine", "Švajcaryja", "Bellevue", "Grand Hotel", "Garni", "Aquarium" and others - vying with those of St. Petersburg and Moscow.

Passing the vul. Kajdanoúskaja and the present day *Prakuratura* (Public Prosecutor's office) to the left, along the Square one notes an elegant Palladian style city **Mansion\*** (no. 15), consisting of a portico between two pilasters and symmetrical wings, each with two levels of three rectangular framed windows and a roof-level cornice. The central portico comprises a central entrance door at ground level, flanked by



two rectangular windows; on the second level a French window opens onto a narrow ornamental balcony, also flanked by two windows. An entablature and cornice are surmounted by a neo-classical triangular pediment and raking cornice, with a central semi-circular lucarne window. Thought to have been built in the latter part of the 18th century as an impressive town residence for the patrician Klučynski family, the premises are now used as administrative offices, the view of which is blighted by a misplaced low-grade functional tower-block.

The old *Hajdukievič Mansion*, with its 18th century *Casino* ballroom, the scene of many concerts and glittering receptions, and the elegantly domed *Cold Synagogue* in vul. Školnaja (*Lenina*) were damaged during the bombardments and cleared after the 1941-1944 Nazi-Soviet conflict. However a substantial 18th century ensemble on Cathedral Square has survived, albeit in a much modified form - the Merchants' or **City Exchange\***, known as *Hašcinny Dvor* (nos. 2-10). The establishment dates back to the 16th century, and its existence was noted in 1697; after the old *Ratuš* (Guildhall) it was the most significant secular building in the Upper Town. Initially it was an S-shaped edifice on two or three levels, consisting of shops and stone benches or counters, but at the end of the 18th century it was reconstructed to a neo-classical design by T. Kramer, with a colonnaded entrance portico, and two corner towers with low pavilion roofs. Spileúski records in the mid-19th century that the ground floor housed shops selling haberdashery, provisions and fruit, such as oranges, lemons, and numerous varieties of plums, apples and pears, including the fine *sapiežanka* pear brought back from Hungary by Prince Kazimier Sapieha. On the second level was the famous Russian *Rakoff* tea-shop, with other boutiques - *Hurvič*, *Luria*, *Šajkievič* and *Delpeche* (fl. 1853) - selling silk, satin and haberdashery, whilst the third floor was used as living quarters. Outside the Exchange a number of small markets stalls dispensed butter, milk, eggs and country cheeses. In 1909 the building was again restructured, the triangular pediment being replaced by an elongated ogee gable and pilasters, second floor balconies and a central entrance with symmetrically disposed side entrances, all three surmounted by balustraded balconies. The corner towers were also re-roofed with rounded cupolas and finials, many of the external accretions being in the *Art nouveau* style. There are facades on the northern and eastern sides of the ensemble, and two inner courtyards; the interior was converted for use as the branch of a Russian Commercial Bank. In 1917 it became for a time the headquarters of the Bolshevik municipal administration; from 1923-1933 the Exchange served as a school of political studies, and thereafter as



municipal offices. Many of the old 18th century *interior features* \* have survived, with moulded *plasterwork* and *modillion cornices* in the corridors and reception rooms, and fine wrought *iron railings* in the staircases and on the landings.

On a site between the Exchange and the Holy Ghost Cathedral stood the old **Guildhall** (*Ratush*), originally constructed after Minsk had received from Grand Duke Alexander Jahajlavič (1492-1506) the privileges of the Magdeburg Statute in 1499. Building work was in progress in 1591, but by 1617 it had been completed, probably as a timberframe edifice. In 1656 it had been replaced by a stone structure, and it was restored in 1744. The outward appearance of the building during the early part of the 18th century is not known; it was in any event successfully redesigned by Kramer in the neo-classical manner with a central bell-tower. Between 1825-1835 a classical colonnaded portico was added, as well as columns at both ends of the building. During this period the *Guildhall* housed the Mayors offices, a Court-room, a guard-room and the city archives. A music school operated on the premises, and also later a small theatre, before the ensemble was demolished in or about 1855. There are at present plans for its reconstruction on its former site, now vacant.

On the north-eastern side of Cathedral Square, a small group of 18th century three and four storied buildings (nos. 19, 21) has survived on an island site at the corner of *zavul. Bernardynski* (*Kiryla i Miafoda, Bakunina*). Apart from its irregular shape, courtyard, outer stairways and unusual balcony, the ensemble has, because of overmuch modernisation, retained little of its origin character. It contains a number of residential appartments.

Following this island block round to the north, there is from the Cathedral forecourt a fine **view** \* across the Lower town, the riverside gardens and the Svislač towards the high-rise buildings on the Parkava Mahistral (*Pr. Mašerava*) in the middle distance. The present **Cathedral of the Holy Ghost** \*\*\* has been served by the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church since they replaced the Bernhardine nuns, expelled in 1852. Originally endowed in 1633 by the nobleman Alexander Sluška, the conventual Church was, according to the local poet and historian L. Syrakomla, built in 1642, but no doubt on account of the Muscovite invasions of 1652-1668, it was not consecrated before 1687. Peter Tolstoy visiting Minsk in 1697 commented on the services there, during which "the organ played in the choir, and they did sing most wondrous well." In 1741 the church seems to have been damaged during one of the many fires which affected the city (90% of the houses



were timber-framed); it was then reconstructed and has since been remodelled a number of times. The Bernhardine convent was liquidated in 1852, and made over to the Russian Synodal Church for use as a monastery,, though it was subsequently closed by the Bolsheviks. During the Nazi-Soviet conflict it was reopened for a short time in 1944 under an elderly monk from Žyrovicy, Archimandrite Serafim, before being closed yet again by the Bolsheviks. It has since been restored for public worship, and serves as a Cathedral for the Russian Patriarchal Church, there being at present no Belarusan Orthodox Autocephalic hierarchy in the Republic of Belaruś.

The Cathedral presents the form of a classical baroque Basilica, comprising a nave and two side aisles, which in Catholic times were disposed as chapels with side-altars. The roof is low hipped and polyhedral at the eastern end over the chancel. The segmentally arched windows of the side aisles are disposed between pilasters with plain capitals beneath a roof level cornice; the clerestory windows of the nave are similarly disposed. The semi-octagonal sanctuary has windows on the upper and lower levels. The dominant feature of the exterior is the characteristic baroque portico between the two squared, three-tiered towers. The towers, 34 metres high, rise out of the corpus of the Church, the lower sections being on a level with the nave and divided from the upper tiers by intermediate cornices. Over a ground floor entrance portico is a large central, segmentally arched window, and above the roof-level cornice a gable-end in the form of a classical pediment with side-buttresses, double-pilasters and an undulating moulded arch surmounted by an ornamental wrought-iron cross. The central panel is decorated with a contemporary Russo-Byzantine mosaic of the *Theotokos* (1992). The upper and lower tiers of the two towers have moulded corner-pilasters; the latter are decorated with blind round or segmental relieving arches, occasionally with windows. The uppermost tiers at belfry level have open arches on four sides; the two lanterns are surmounted by small baroque domes and ornamental crosses.

The interior\* follows the pattern of a western Basilica with a central barrel-vaulted nave and side aisles, divided by arcade piers and pilasters. The flooring of the cathedral is tessellated with a central inlaid approach to the arch-hierarchal *ambon*. The upper part of the nave is lit by clerestory windows and suspended brass chandeliers. A fine iconostasis in the 19th-century Russian style, attributed to the artist Mikalaj Huseú, divides the nave from the sanctuary. Set against the arcade piers adjoining the screen are two portico-shaped shrines with colonnettes and pediment, framing to the left of the altar an icon of the *Ascension*.



and to the right, one of the *Dormition*. There are in the Cathedral many fine examples of iconography of the Belarusan school, often draped with intricately embroidered *ručniki* (ornamental cloths). In a votive side-chapel in the northern aisle is the miraculous **Icon of Our Lady of Minsk\*\***, a 17th century copy of the original painting from Constantinople. The old 18th-century riza or covering of silver and gold depicting the Christ-child and Mother wearing crowns was replaced under Bolshevik rule by an ill-fitting crownless version.

According to tradition the original of the *Hodigitria* icon was painted by the evangelist St. Luke: when the *Theotokos* saw the work she exclaimed: "May the grace of God be upon this image for ever". After his baptism in 988 in Korsun, Greece, the Ukrainian Grand Duke Vladimir brought it (or a copy) back to Kiev and installed it in his Chapel Royal where for centuries it was widely venerated as a wonder-working icon. When in 1482 the Ukrainian capital was ravaged by the Tatars, an infidel rider ripped off the gold case and jewels from the relic and cast the icon into the Dniapro river. By the grace of Heaven, the icon was borne upstream along the Biarazina and Svislač rivers, where it was brought to shore on the 13th August 1500, discovered by passers-by attracted by its holy radiance, and solemnly installed on the Feast of the Dormition in the *Church of the Nativity of Our Lady* at Minsk castle. The icon soon became the object of wide-spread devotion throughout the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belarús, and was popularly believed to be miraculous. According to the Belarusan art historian Anton Šukelojć, the sceptre borne by the Theotokos was added to the painting during its restoration in the 16th century. On the Feast of St. Luke, the 18th October 1616 the icon was solemnly blessed by the Greek Catholic Metropolitan Veniamin Rutski and translated in procession to the Basilian monastic Church of the Holy Ghost in the Upper Town, where it remained through successive rebuildings until the 1930's. The relic - or perhaps a later copy - was hidden away from the Bolsheviks with other icons among a consignment of firewood by a certain Kišlevič, former carter to the art-loving Vankovič family. During the Nazi-Soviet conflict it was for a short time installed in the Yellow Church in the Lower Town. When after their return, the Church was again closed by the Bolsheviks, the Icon was removed to the former Bernhardine Church, now the Holy Ghost Cathedral, where it has remained ever since. The troparion appointed to be sung in its honour recalls: "Upon the waters of the Svislač thou didst, from Constantinople and Kiev, O Immaculate Maiden, show forth grace unto the Divinely-preserved city of Minsk." The Arms granted to the municipality in 1591 bear as the principal



charge the image of the *Theotokos* flanked by figures of angels.

Originally, according to Archimandrite Horoška, the icon had a fine 18th century rococo silver *riza* with symbolic crowns in the traditional Belarusan style. After the suppression of the *Unia* in 1839, a new silver and jewelled riza was offered by a donor from St. Petersburg and the wife of the then Russian Governor Shkiarevitch. The new ornament was solemnly installed in the then Cathedral by the Russian Orthodox Bishop of Minsk and Babrujsk Mikhail Golubovitch on Christmas day 1852. This costly offering was, according to an account published in the United States in 1957, plundered by the Bolsheviks in 1922, on the pretext of collecting donations for "Volga famine relief". The newly consecrated Metropolitan Melchisadek Pajeúski of the restored Belarusan Autocephalic Orthodox Church was indicted, together with his clergy, for allegedly concealing religious treasures, in particular the valuable 19th century jewelled *riza* or covering of the icon Our Lady of Minsk. In fact it had been removed together with other valuables for safe-keeping, after being properly recorded in an inventory. He was placed under house arrest, and then brought before the City Court for a show trial which lasted for five days. The City Court was at the time located in the former Basilian Monastery on Cathedral square, where Karuś Kahaniec, Jakub Kolas and Aleś Harun had stood trial for their patriotic activities during the 1905 anti-Tsarist revolts. The court building was surrounded by crowds, which the mounted Bolshevik militia had difficulty in driving back, and the Court-room itself was thronged with believers. When the Metropolitan entered the Court and was brought to the dock, all present rose. As the evidence of witnesses revealed the falsity of the Soviet accusations, the public applauded. Metropolitan Melchisedek was discharged and then released, but the Bolsheviks refused to return the relic on payment of a cash sum equivalent to three times its estimated value, and insisted on confiscating the silver *riza* as well. The present poorly fitted silver casing is made in a characteristic mid-19th century Russian style, without the traditional crowns.

Another wonder-working icon preserved in the Cathedral is that of **Our Lady of Krupicy\***. Originally - according to the ecclesiastical historian Archimandrite Leú Haroška (1911-1977), who made a study of Belarusan icons of the *Theotokos*, - the image had been preserved in the village Church of that name since 1612, but was later transferred to the *Church of the Protection and Holy Cross* (now demolished) in Minsk, next to the *Jubilejny Dom*. It portrays a beautifully reflective Virgin and Child in golden brocade robes, with a Crown borne by two winged angels in garments of red and blue, the traditional colours of Seraphim



and Cherubim. From Skaryna's time the crown and flowered robes were seen not as meaningless secular or "Latin" accretions, but as vested with the mystical significance of the *Kether* ("Diadem") or manifestation of the Royal Presence in the Crown of the Tree of Life, and of Creation as the cosmic robe of God. The importance attributed by the iconographer to the flower-bestrewn, vestment-like robe of the Madonna reflects the Scriptural symbolism of the "royal apparel", the "garments of gladness", the "precious vestments of the soul", the "robes of Glory" and the "vestures which are formed of stainless days". With typically Belarusan insight, the iconographer achieves a subtle amalgam of Byzantine spirituality and Latin naturalism, contrasting with the abstraction and austere mysticism of the Novgorod and Russian schools of icon-painting. Of this latter tradition the Cathedral contains a number of examples, together with some fine Russian ecclesiastical ornaments. According to the historian Anton Šukielojc of New York, a number of these and other icons, together with some valuable books were brought to the Cathedral by Archimandrite Serafim in 1944 from the former Ecclesiastical Museum in *Jubilejny Dom*.

Another fine icon dating from 1731 depicts the **Circumcision of the Infant Christ** in which facial expressions have been dramatised in the baroque manner of El Greco; only the characteristic gold-brocade background remains to evoke the traditional concept of creation as the vestment of the Deity. A masterly mid-18th century Belarusan icon of **St. Nicholas** \* is remarkable in the finesse of its composition and the warm richness of its colours. Eight miniatures in oval roccoco frames depict scenes and miracles from the life of the Saint - including the saving from shipwreck of a finely equipped sailing vessel; the gift of gold purses as a dowry for the poor man's daughters, and the raising of the three murdered children from the inn-keepers pickle-barrel. St. Nicholas, one of the most popular and revered Saints in Belarus and the patron of sailors, as well as of children at Christmas time, figures prominently in the musical folklore of the Minsk region - *O, chto, chto Mikolaja lubić*: "Pray for us, O Nicholas, / And we who weep before thee, / Shall glorify thee / And praise thy name for ever." (Šejn, *Materialy*, II, 663). In the late 15th century there was in Minsk a Greek-rite monastery dedicated to his name.

The organ no longer accompanies the choir from the organ loft, though in its days as an Orthodox monastery, from 1902-1905, its director was the then young Belarusan ethnographer and Church musician Mikola Ravienski (1886-1953), later choirmaster in the Yellow Church. His settings of the *Cherubikon*, the *Canon* and the *Creed* com-



posed in 1943 compare favourably with the best works of his contemporaries Ancaú (1865-1945) and Turankoú (1886-1958) and are not inferior to Balkan or Russian Church music of that period. As later with Kulikovič, many of the chants of his Liturgy were based on folk-motifs, and his *Cherubikon* No. 3 incorporates the theme of the folksong *Ci šviec, ci svitaje*.

Adjacent to the Cathedral lies the old convent of the Bernhardine nuns, with its cloistered courtyard and vaulted ambulatory, dating from 1642, and restored in 1741 after a major city fire. Raised on two floors and a basement, the north-western side of the convent courtyard adjoins the Church. Its exterior appearance is perfectly plain, but the inner walls are adorned with pilasters; the fenestration on both sides is rectangular. The principal entrance is on the north side. The residential quarters include conventual cells, and a refectory, as well as guest-rooms. With the failure of the National Uprising of 1863-1864, the convent became the seat of the Imperial Russian investigating committee hunting down and interrogating insurgents. Large numbers of female prisoners were for some years kept in captivity here, among them Camilla, daughter of the poet and patriot Vincent Dunin-Marcynkievič, himself committed to the nearby *Piščaloúski Fortress* in vul. Lošyca for his part in the Uprising. During the time of his appointment at the turn of the century, the composer Mikola Ravienski had living quarters in the complex. On a visit from Canada to Minsk on the 1st March 1992, the Primate of the Belarusan Autocephalic Orthodox Church, Archbishop Mikolaj Maciukievič sang the Holy Liturgy in the Belarusan language in the Exarch's private *Chapel of All the Saints of Belaruś*, although the two archhierarchs did not concelebrate.

Reverting from the Cathedral forecourt, the vul. Bernhardinskaja is a pleasant lane on the **East side** of the Upper Town, sloping down towards the river Svislač. On the other side of the lane opposite the Holy Ghost Cathedral stands the second monastic complex on the East side, the **Bernardine Church of St. Joseph** and the adjacent friary buildings. The original Church was constructed in 1624, though other sources say 1628, and rebuilt in 1740, after the fire of 1738, in its present form, subect to some modifications carried out in 1984. Its original appearance is not known, and the first church was probably a timber-frame edifice. Ščakacichin was of the view that the church was rebuilt of brick during the latter part of the 17th century, after the sacking of Minsk by the Russian Tsar Alexei Michailovich Romanov. Contemporary illustrations show the Church to have consisted of a nave, with a lower level of four rectangular windows, and a matching upper level fenestration of



round-arched windows between plain pilasters, divided horizontally by intermediate and roof level cornices. The pitched roof had a cylindrical turret or bell-tower with a low conical spire, apparently timbered, surmounted by a plain latin cross. The western entrance facade comprised a portal with moulded jambs, lintel and triangular pediment disposed between two framed rectangular windows. A gable end in the form of a triangular pediment resting on a second tier with lateral scrolled buttresses, intermediate cornice and *oeil de boeuf* window. The style might have been described as Baltic-Dutch, though Tolstoy in 1697 found it of "mean appearance".

The later baroque reconstruction has considerable appeal in its sophisticated simplicity. The main corpus consists of a nave with side aisles, and a chancel representing an extension of the nave only. The lower and intermediate levels of fenestration in the aisles and nave are round arched, the upper level being segmentally headed, between seven plain pilasters. There is a plain roof-level cornice with a pitched roof, sloping trihedrally at the eastern end of the chancel. The Western front is an undulating convex curve with an inclined roof over the aisles, and the walls decorated with two pilasters, cornice and blind arch. The portico front comprises a round-arched entrance porch with a plain lean-to roof resting on a cornice and flanking pilasters; above it is a vertical triple-arched window with a moulded segmentally headed lintel flanked by two blind arches between plain pilasters extending from a base to a multiple roof cornice. A gable-end pediment flanked by concave curved and scrolled buttresses, with small pilasters and crowning arched and concave pediment and cross complete the West front ornamentation. The edifice preserves a distinctly central European character. However, since 1872 the church has been readapted to house city archive material, and although the interior is scheduled for restoration, much damage was done in the course of conversion. The barrel vaulting has been preserved, but the frescoes, wall-paintings and votive pictures are not thought to have survived. No fewer than nine side altars were in use in the early 19th century. The church fell victim to the widespread and ruthless Russian repression of Belarusan national identity after the failed Uprising of Kastuś Kalinoŭski in 1863-1864. The Bernardine Friars were simply expelled in 1852; the convent was made over to the Russian Orthodox monks, and the Church rededicated to SS. Cyril and Methodius. The building itself was subsequently secularised by the truncation of the West front, and by fundamental internal restructuring.

The monastic buildings on the north-eastern side of the Church formed a P-shaped ensemble round an inner courtyard; the buildings



were on two floors with the fenestration divided by vertical pilasters. Accommodation included conventual cells for the friars, a refectory and guest quarters, as well as a school, an infirmary, stables and a brew-house. Part of the monastic orchard and gardens have survived. On the southern side of the Church a number of small shops and stores were built between 1810 and 1817 with open arcading to a design attributed to the architect M. Čachoúski. These market stalls or *kramy* became known as *Vilenčuki*\*, but in due course the arches were bricked up, and they were sometime even used as living accommodation.

From a garden entrance in vul. Mala-Bernardynskaja by way of a small wooden gallery, there is access at the rear of the *Vilenčuki* to the Greek Catholic **Uniate Chapel of St. Euphrosyne** of Polacak, founded in 1991. Here the Holy Liturgy is sung regularly on Sunday mornings in the Belarusian language to a whole cycle of liturgical texts translated and published in London since 1984 by Archpriest Alexander Nadson, Apostolic Visitor of Belarusians, with traditional Belarusian melodies from the *Bełaruski Carkoúny Spieúnik* (1979, 1991) and *Bełaruski Duchoúny Spieúnik* (1989), some chants dating back to the 17th century. Other settings are to music by the long banned Belarusian Church composers Michal Ancaú, Alaksiej Turankoú, Mikola Ravienski and Mikola Kulikovič. The Greek-rite church was established in Belaruś in 989, before the schism between the eastern and western churches; Latin churches were also founded and many towns and villages had places of worship in both rites which coexisted in concord, little concerned with doctrinal squabbles. As a Greek-rite petitioner wrote in 1614: "We believe in the sacraments of the Roman Church as we do in those of our Greek Churches; we have for many years considered the Catholics to be our brothers, and God forbid we should ever believe them to be heretics".

The Lithuanian and Belarusian see of Kiev (1415) formally accepted Union with Rome, first at Florence (1439) and later at Bieraście (1596). A non-conforming fraction of the Greek Church remained active in Minsk until the partitions in the 18th century, their clergy enjoying the patronage and protection of Moscow. Officially suppressed by the Russian Tsars in 1839, the Greek Church united to Rome, considered by many to be the national Church, was never extinguished in Belaruś; it survived in the western province of Padlasia until 1875, and continued clandestinely until partially revived after 1905. Both Kastuś Kalinoúski (1838-1864) and the Minsk poet K. Kahaniec (1868-1918) professed the Uniate faith. By 1918 there were upward of 30,000 Belarusian Uniates. Suppressed again in 1945, a few parishes flourished abroad in emigra-



tion, both in Western Europe (*London, Rome, Paris, Munich, Goslar, Louvain*) and the New World (*New York, Chicago*) where they had their own Bishops - Časlaŭ Sipovič (1914-1981), a student beneficiary of a Princess Mahdalena Radzivil scholarship, and Ŭl. Tarasievič (1921-1986). The Church was officially recognised by the authorities in Belaruś in 1991, and it attracts substantial support; they are said now to number well over 100.000. Since 1990 they have episodically published in Minsk a well-trimmed journal - *Unia* ("Union") in the Belarusan language.

At the back of the Cathedral and Convent the visitor passes between a row of modest 19th century long-fronted, hipped-roof town houses, down **zavul. Mala-Bernardynski\*** to vul. Zybyckaja (*Handlovaja*) and the Svislač River gardens. This street is in a sense the symbol of the persistent attempts by alien officialdom to eradicate the individual character of the Belarusan capital. In a short space of just over a century the street name has changed no fewer than *seven* times: from the original *Bernardynski* to *Monastyrski* under the Tsars, when the monastery between 1852 and 1869 became a Russian Orthodox church dedicated to SS. Cyril and Methodius. In 1919 under the Second BNR, the municipality of Minsk restored the name of *Bernardynski* only for the Bolsheviks after 1922 to rename it, in honour of the erratic Russian revolutionary, *M. Bakunin*. During the German occupation from 1941-1944 it was called *zavul. Paŭluka Bachryma*, after the young early-19th century poet and talented blacksmith from Krośyn, but it reverted to vul. Bakunina in late 1944. In 1992, supposedly to commemorate the 1100th anniversary of SS. Cyril and Methodius, the street was again renamed after the Tsarist *Kirila-Miafodski* monastery installed there in 1852, with an appropriate plaque being carried in solemn procession and affixed in a prominent position by the Moscow Patriarchal Metropolitan Philaret (Vokhrameev). Perhaps the street is best remembered as the steep incline up which the horse-drawn *konki* trams formerly had to struggle, hauling their passengers to Cathedral Square *en route* for the railway station.

According to Špileŭski the zavul. Bernardynski was also in 1853 the site of an exclusive Russian boarding school for young ladies known as the Pension Parnikel. Another similar establishment, the Pension *Montigrandi*, operated in the nearby vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*)

An erstwhile warren of timbered cottages and small shops, only a few now remain in vul. Zybyckaja; they include a two-storied 18th century brick building on the left, to which a third floor was added with a pitched roof at the close of the 19th century. The facade is divided by the traditional intermediary cornices; the lower level windows are rect-



angular with plain horizontal projecting lintels, whilst the second and third levels are segmentally arched with lintels to match. The house has four wrought iron balconies symmetrically disposed on the façade. In this vicinity, if not in this building, the widely popular Belarusian classical composer Mikola Kulikovič-Ščahloú (1897-1969) resided during his years in Minsk, before emigrating to Germany and subsequently to the United States. Kulikovič was a committed exponent of the national style, both in his orchestral and choral works. In addition to a piano concerto, two symphonies and four operas, including the historical *Usiaslaú Čaradziej* ("Usiaslaú the Enchanter" [1944]) all composed in Minsk, he harmonised several hundred folk-songs, and wrote many Church anthems, some based on melodies from old 16th and 17th century Belarusian *Irmalohia*.

Turning right along the river gardens, the visitor can start to climb up one of the oldest and most attractive streets in Minsk leading to the Upper Town, **zavul. Mala-Bernardynski\*\*** (*Herzena*). Its fate has also been linked to political name-switching, from the original to *Mala-Manastyrski*, then following the 1863 uprising, to *Stary Manastyrski*, and after the Bolshevik revolution the present name of a distinguished Russian *narodnik*, utopist philosopher and non-resident of Minsk - *A. Hertzen*. The street is said to have existed since the 14th and 15th centuries, though the original houses would have been timber-framed, and have long since perished, or been destroyed by the successive fires which ravaged the city. On the right-hand side of the street are a number of plain 19th century buildings, of which surveys and historical books have little to say. To the left, however there is a row of varied **Burgher houses\*\*** dating from the 18th and 19th centuries which are of considerable artistic and historical interest, even in their present neglected state. A corner site stucco building on two and three floors (no. 12), was constructed of brick in the first part of the 19th century with the traditional pitched roof, attic window in the gable and intermediate cornice. The first floor windows have ornamental projecting lintels and the roof cornice is fasciated. The next building of the group (no. 10) on two levels with its hipped roof, plain corner pilasters and small paned windows has an elegantly sober appearance. The steepness of the incline requires the next two houses, the first (no. 8) with a hipped roof and fasciated cornice, the second (no. 6) pitched roof and attractive but simple timbered façade, to be built on one floor only - the first being on a split level. The most graceful of the houses is a little mansion (no. 4) dating from the end of the 18th century, which has a central slightly projecting façade of three windows, a wrought iron balcony, and triangular pedi-



ment with a central lucarne attic window, and two side wings one with a coach entrance, and both with a symmetrically disposed blind arch. By way of additional but unobtrusive ornamentation, there is a double intermediate cornice, and a fasciated roof cornice.

Moving on towards the Upper town, a red-brick, pitch-roofed three level **apartment block** (no. 2) contrasts agreeably with the white and cream stucco of the earlier constructions. Of late 19th century design, it has intermediate cornices between floors, segmentally arched fenestration, with four irregularly placed pilasters on the third level and slightly projecting lintels on the ground floor. Another attractive asymmetrical late 18th century building (no. 1), on two floors and a basement level, has a central rectangular coach entrance, and a façade ornamented with plain flat pilasters. At the level of the hipped roof there is a fine, heavily fasciated cornice.

Following this building round to the left brings the visitor in **zavul. Seminarski** (*Muzykalny*), another East-side lane with a history going back to the 14th century, and linking the Upper Town with vul. Zybyckaja. Three buildings from the past have survived, of which the 18th century corner site with zav. Mala-Bernardynski is one. Contiguous thereto is a low one storied brick-built house (no. 3) of asymmetrical form, its flat surface relieved by cornices. The most impressive building in the street is the old **Masonic Lodge\***, another late 18th century building, the seat of the "Northern Torch" lodge of the Order of Freemasons, established in Belaruś in the 1770s. Essentially a square building on three floors, each façade has a slightly projecting central section side windows flanked by two narrow wings. A massive dentilled cornice surmounts the whole, with a central triangular pediment. The fenestration is plain rectangular with the second level three central windows forming the focal point on each front. All the windows on the second level have moulded surrounds with ornamental stucco keystones. The three windows of the central section beneath the central pediment are themselves each surmounted by a triangular pediment-shaped lintel: the plain central section windows have colonnettes supporting a round-arched lintel and return. The interior is now divided as living space, but a number of apartments have interesting vaulted ceilings.

Reverting to Cathedral Square, the profusion of trees and greenery is a remarkable feature of old Minsk, its court-yards and gardens, particularly in the East End district of the Upper Town. Traditionally, as old engravings and photographs show, the most widespread species of tree were the poplar and linden, which served to enhance the colour and silhouette of the city.



Perhaps the most substantial group of historic buildings to survive as a unit in the Upper Town are the precincts of the **Basilian Monastery and Convent** \*\*. Originally the two were an ensemble linked together by the Church of the Holy Ghost, which began as a wooden built Greek-rite Church constructed in the 16th century. In 1617 a vacant plot of land was donated to build a monastery, the building of which was completed probably after 1634, when a wealthy burgher of Polack bequeathed a sum of 2.000 zlotys to the foundation. The adjacent convent of nuns was said to have been endowed in 1641 by the Greek-rite Metropolitan of Kiev, Anton Sielava (d. 1655), though it was probably already in existence in the 1630s. The entire complex consisted of an L-shaped ensemble formed by the Church of the Holy Ghost and an extended monastic wing on two stories linked by a narrow enclosed gallery raised on an arched bridge over the vul. Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) to the convent, a P-shaped building lying parallel to the monastery, and forming with it the three sides of a square. Although the conventual Church no longer exists, the Monastery and convent buildings have survived in a modified form, and are now in the course of reconstruction, in an attempt to restore some of the original character of Cathedral Square and the Upper town.

The original 17th century *Church of the Holy Ghost* consisted of a single nave without side-aisles, lit by four late Gothic arched windows on the north and south sides. The east and west front facing the square were built in an Italo-Flemish style, with the pitched roof ending in two ornate Renaissance gables with three step-back tiers of stuccoed pilasters, baroque scrolled and double-concave curved buttresses, each tier being divided horizontally by intermediate cornices. Between the pilasters in the lower two tiers were fresco paintings of saints; the top tier ended in a broken segmented pediment, surmounted by a central finial and cross. The lower part of the facade formed a square divided vertically into three equal sections by four corinthian pilasters. In the middle section was a round-arched entrance and portico with a broken segmented pediment and small lateral pilasters. In the two side sections were two blind panels in square moulded frames. On the upper level a central vertical arched window and return with a moulded surround, over the entrance was flanked by two matching blind arches, the panels of which were ornamented with frescoed paintings of saints. Little is known of its interior decoration, though there was certainly an iconostasis and icons of a style contemporary to those displayed in the *National Museum of Art.* The Church was looted by the Russian army of Peter the Great, when he sacked and burnt Minsk during the Northern Wars in



1707.

A *School* founded in 1617 (an alternative date given is 1633) was attached to the Cathedral and monastery of the Holy Ghost, where the standard curriculum included the study of Greek, Latin and old Slavonic, as well as of Belarusan and Polish. Times were troubled, and a number of attacks on Uniate foundations were caused by attempts to seize property lawfully vested in the conforming Greek hierarchy, initiated by the Vilnia Confraternity after 1609 and later emulated by the Minsk mob led by the shoemaker Palavinka on 23rd August 1616. Josaphat Kuncevič suspected that the unrest, largely caused by false rumours of projected changes by the Uniates in the Easter calendar and the marriage of priests, was incited by both Sultan (then allied to the Cossacks) and the newly elected Russian Tsar Michail Romanov, anxious not to lose the lucrative revenues of the Lithuanian eparchy to Rome. The Basilian school in Minsk was not a large establishment; the teaching staff consisting of "two monks who taught Latin and a lay cantor to run the Ruthenian school". Benjamin Rutki, future Greek Catholic Metropolitan of Kiev, taught here for a time and is said to have started work on the reformed rules for the Basilian Order. Another *alumnus* of the monastery was Apanas Pakosta, an able lawyer, who specialised in suits directed at preventing non-Uniate foundations from claiming Church property; "All the endowments of the Holy Ghost Monastery were preserved thanks to the efforts of this courageous man." He later became Bishop of Cholm, where he was also successful in preventing Church endowments falling into the hands of the pro-Constantinopolitan faction to the possible detriment of national security. There was also a conventual printing press in Minsk set up in the 17th century, but inactive for many years prior to the rescript of Grand-Duke Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski in 1790, authorising its re-establishment. As a centre of learning, the Monastery had a *Library* containing a considerable number of printed books and manuscripts, including a rare copy of the 15th century *Nikifarouški Belarusan-Lithuanian Chronicle*. The study of Greek-rite Church music also flourished in the Holy Ghost monastery, and an *Irmaloj* or collection of Belarusan chants still exists, compiled there in the mid-17th century by the Basilian hieromonk, *Tarasii* of Minsk.

In 1795 the Monastery was closed down: the Church was given over to the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church and renamed the *Cathedral Church of SS Peter and Paul*. A part of the building was used for a time as a residence for the Russian Archbishop, and part of the remainder was converted into a provincial school for the children of conforming Greek-rite gentry. A building was added on the vul.



Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) by the Minsk architect T. Kramer, which from 1801 to 1817 served as a Theatre. In 1803 the original wing was reclassified as a Lycee (*Hymnasium*) and continued as an educational establishment until it was extensively damaged in the fire of 1835. Rebuilt in 1852 to plans by K. Chščanovič, a third floor was added and the buildings extended on vul. Daminikanskaja to form an inner courtyard; the present-day façade owes its appearance to the reconstruction. It consists of a neo-classical front with a stepped rectangular pediment at roof-level over the central section and a continuous horizontal cornice with moulded brackets. Over the central entrance door is a small wrought iron balcony. There is an intermediate cornice between the ground and first floor, whose windows have have moulded drip-cap lintels. The interior has vaulted corridors and chambers dating back to the 17th century, and there is some period wrought-iron work on their staircases. During the latter part of the 19th century the building was used as a city Court House, and it was from here that the poets K. Kahaniec and Jakub Kolas were tried and committed to imprisonment in the *Piščalaúski Fortress* for their part in clandestine anti-Tsarist activities after 1905.

With the establishment of Bolshevik rule in 1919 the building was renamed *Dom Pracy* ("House of Labour") and it became for a time the seat of the Peoples Commissariate for Labour and Trades Unions. From the balcony, the Russian revolutionary Michail Kalinin in 1919 addressed a rally of children from 'proletarian' schools in Minsk. During the Nazi-Soviet conflict (1941-1944), the Germans for a time occupied the former monastery and used it as the administrative offices of their General-Commissariat for Belaruś. Since the return of the Soviets in 1944, the building has continued in use as administrative offices until the present-day.

The old Basilian monastery looks out onto what was in the 19th century known as the Boulevard, an elegant promenade area comprising a **Garden square** traversed by diagonal pathways, at the intersection of which have stood statues commemorating personalities or events according to the prevailing political system. Under Tsarist occupation the statue was that of *Alexander II*, who under the Bolsheviks was first replaced by the Jewish revolutionary *Hirsch Leckert*, and then by the figure of a peasant woman (*Rabotnica-Sialanka*). In turn the Germans replaced it by a fountain which stood here until recent times. The Boulevard was a favoured promenading area for the fashionable people in town to be seen on Sundays and Public holidays, taking the air.

The adjacent **Convent** \* of the Basilian nuns has survived in a less mutilated form, and is at present being restored to its original appear-



ance. An L-shaped building constructed on two floors, the south wing had gables in the Baltic-Dutch style with concave, scrolled buttresses. Sometime between 1634 and 1637 Metropolitan Rutski compiled a collection of *Meditations* and thoughts on the duties and virtues of religious, together with a *Ritual of Professing and Vesting nuns* intended for the use of the Convent of the Holy Ghost in Minsk. A copy of these, stitched for safety into her clothing, was later taken to Rome by Mother Macrina Miačyslaúskaja after her expulsion from Minsk in or about 1837, and was printed there in 1854 by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

By the early 19th century the nuns appear to have become to a great extent polonised; their main activity was running a school for children, and an orphanage. The building seems to have escaped the worst effects of the fire of 1835 which damaged the adjacent monastery; much of the old vaulting in the corridors, chambers and cells remains.

According to official reports of the Holy Synod, the Basilian nuns were allowed to remain in their convent until 1834, though they no longer had their own church. Russian Orthodox sources do not claim the convent was damaged in the fire of 1834. They were then in effect expelled on the not unfamiliar pretext that the convent was required for conversion into a hospital, and they were "transferred" to Miadziel near lake Naroč, where the remaining recalcitrants were, some five years later and after the suppression of the Union in 1839, said to have been permitted to change to the Roman rite and return to their homes.

Associated with the closure was the strange story recorded by a Mme de Coriolis from its reputed last abbess Mother Irena Makryna Miačyslaúskaja (d. 1869). Ordered in or about 1837 (there is a date discrepancy here) to embrace Russian Orthodoxy or face expulsion, the sisters, according to Makryna's report, chose the path of resistance. Roused at five in the morning by the noise of the soldiery, she related how more than a hundred schoolchildren (including 47 orphans) ran through the streets of Minsk weeping and shouting "They are taking away our good mothers ! The soldiers have come for them!" Her story of their fate roused widespread indignation throughout Western Europe, although the account of their imprisonment and brutal treatment at the hand of the convert Archbishop Jazep Siemaška (1798-1868) was the subject of controversy. Her report of their sufferings was published in Paris in 1846, and told of torture by beatings and immersion in freezing water, forced labour and the subsequent internment undergone by these and other sisters in the erstwhile *Carmelite convent*\* of Miadziel, recently converted into a Russian prison-convent. This resulted in the death



or ill-health of many of their number. In fairness it should be said that Russian Orthodox religious life and penances, particularly in winter, can be rigorous and demanding. Ultimately in 1845, thanks to the help received from charitable peasants and Jews ("The Jews have always shown themselves to be filled with charity towards us. God enlighten and save them!"), a few nuns were said to have escaped to Prussia, whence 'Mother' Makryna made her way to Rome. The story was seized upon and developed by Polish chauvinists, anxious to make political capital out of it for their own ends, thereby evoking repetitious denials of ill-treatment and prevaricating rebuttals from official Tsarist sources. Many preferred Makryna's version of events, albeit at third hand, but doubts were nonetheless cast on her identity, credentials and mental health. Russian gentleness with dissidents, however, has never been a feature of their governance, and even allowing for a few discrepancies, and possibly some fevered overstatements, misreporting and journalistic garbling, her story of the persecution of the Basilian nuns from Minsk, - whether in 1837 or a couple of years earlier matters not - corroborated by evidence of similar and well documented brutalities in other districts, has a general ring of authenticity about it.

Whether the nunnery was ever, like the Basilian convent in Trinity suburb, put to use as a hospital is not yet known, but the face of the monastic ensemble underwent profound changes in the 19th century. The renamed *Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul* was, after a fire in the Upper town in 1835, extensively remodelled in a relatively neutral classical style. Two lateral towers with tetrahedral spires were added to the west front, and a central tower over the nave, also with a steep pavillion roof over a central dome. All three spires were adorned with diminutive Russian onion domes. However the arcaded gallery linking the Church to the former convent was preserved. This was apparently only a temporary solution, for in 1893 the Cathedral was once again rebuilt, this time with a nave and two aisles together with all the accoutrements of the pseudo-Russian Orthodox style - a central tower with 'hen-and-four-chicks' onion-domes, a massive bell-tower with a profusion of *kokoschnik* ogee-arched windows and gables, ornate cornices, corbels, bands of zigzag plasterwork, coloured tiling and multiple Russian three-barred gilt crosses.

The new Cathedral was to witness the dramatic scene of the Restoration of a Belarusan Orthodox Church independent of Russian domination, an aspiration realised in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belarus in the 14th and 15th centuries. Prior to 1793 there was no Orthodox Bishop in Minsk, and since 1663 only one non-Uniate hierarch



for the whole of Belaruś, with the title *Bishop of Orša, Mścislaú and Mahiloú*. The Minsk Eparchy established under the Empress Catherine, was a Russian creation, and there was no independent Belarusan hierarchy (excepting Varlaam Šyśacki in 1812), until the election of Metropolitan Melchisadek Pajeúski (1922-1931).

On the 23rd July 1922 the Orthodox Bishop of Minsk and Turaú, Michal Pajeúski was elected the Metropolitan of a Belarusan Autocephalic Church. During the solemnities the Metropolitan installed three new bishops: Filaret Ramenski to the see of Babruisk, Mikola Šemiatyla as Bishop of Slucak, and Ioann to the see of Mazyr. The Belarusan language was brought into liturgical usage, the singing of the old popular *Kantyčki* became general, and Belarusan ornaments and embroidery began to adorn the churches. Two years later the Metropolitan was summoned to Moscow, and during his absence groups of clergy from the Bolshevik backed "Autonomous Revived Church of Belaruś" seized the Cathedral. The services were boycotted by the faithful, who ultimately were able by force to evict the interlopers. However the Metropolitan was again arrested in 1926 and deported to Siberia. The Belarusan Bishops Ioann, Filaret and Mikola were all incarcerated and died in prison. 2.800 parishes were dissolved and over 3.600 priests of the Belarusan Autocephalic Church removed. Melchisedek himself died in 1931, a martyr in exile. In 1937 the Minsk Cathedral was blown up by the Bolsheviks and the site cleared. It has remained vacant ever since, though there are plans for the church to be reconstructed in its original 17th century form.

The Belarusan Autocephalic Orthodox Church was left in commission for 11 years but was, during the German occupation, re-established in Minsk in 1942 under the Metropolitan-elect Pancielejman Ražnoúski (1941-1950), assisted by two other bishops: Filafej of Mahiloú and Afanasij Martos of Viciebsk and Polacak. Two further bishops, Benedict of Hrodnia and Hryhor of Homiel and Mazyr later adhered to the Church, and in 1944 more than 100.000 believers joined the Epiphany procession for the blessing of the waters in Minsk. Evacuated from Belaruś to escape the advancing Bolshevik Red Army, the hierarchy took refuge in Western Germany in 1944 and in 1946 to preserve their canonicity, united with the Russian Church in Exile. A substantial proportion of Belarusan Orthodox believers led by Archpriest Michal Lapicki rejected this Union, and at the *Council of Constance* in 1948 the Ukrainian Archbishop Siarhiey Ahijenka took them under his protection. A year later a new Bishop was consecrated, and the Belarusan Autocephalic Orthodox Church overseas has since been governed successively by Archbishops



Vasil Tamaščyk (1949-1980), Andrej Kryt (1980-1983) and Mikalaj Maciukievič (since 1983).

The southern end of Cathedral Square at the corner of vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*) and vul. Valockaja (*Internacyjanalnaja E.*) has in recent times lost two historic buildings. The *Hotel Éúropa*, built in the *Art nouveau* style with 130 rooms, reputedly the most elegant establishment in Minsk in pre-1914 times, was gutted during World War II and not restored. The historian A. Šukielajć relates how much of the destruction blamed on German bombing, was in fact caused by incendiary grenades tossed into buildings by departing Bolshevik Secret Police units on 24th June 1941 as part of the traditional Russian "scorched earth" policy. But in 1913, in addition to electricity, telephone, bath-room, lavatory and central heating in every room, - rare luxuries even in St. Petersburg - there was a lift, a *salon de coiffure* and a first-class restaurant (*chef*. A. Saúlevič), which in 1919 advertised in Belarusan its evening *Table d'hôte* menu at 10 roubles a head. The gifted young, silk bow-tied sculptor Zair Azhur (b.1908), the epicurean orchestral conductor I. Githarć (1893-1966) and the *prima donna* Larysa Alexandrovskaja (1904-1980) were habitues of its elegant restaurant "where a particularly cosy room was decorated with inlaid wood, lit up by day with wide sunny windows, and at night by agreeably shaded lamps", and where they were "regaled with various dainties and drinks". In the rougher times of 1917 it was commandeered as the Bolsheviks' headquarters in the Upper town, until their expulsion the following spring by Col. Jezavitaú's detachments. A later victim, this time to bad planning, was the historic old *Municipal Theatre*, which had replaced the Kramer Theatre in vul. Daminikanskaja (1817) and the *Casino Theatre* in the Hajdukievič Mansion (1825). Here in 1852 the first Belarusan opera "Sialanka" by S. Maniuška was performed, to a *libretto* by V. Dunin Marcynkievič.

The demolition of the Municipal theatre was part of a roadwidening scheme to open up the view of the adjoining **National Conservatoire\***, built in 1958, whose concert hall of 800 seats may have been seen as rendering the older building redundant. Part of an overall scheme to endow the Belarusan capital with a comprehensive range of public buildings, the Conservatoire was designed by R. Hehart as a trident-shaped ensemble comprising a projecting central portico on a main façade and two projecting side-wings with, to the rear, the main corpus of the auditorium. Raised on four floors, the ensemble is divided by a horizontal cornice between the second and third levels. The fenestration consists of alternating ranks of rectangular and round-arched windows, with cen-



tral vertical blind arches extending between two floors above and below the dividing cornice. The central portico consists of an entablature triangular pediment and raking cornice, with a central *oeil-de-boeuf* window, raised on four corinthian columns. A flight of steps leads to the main entrance, giving access to a vestibule and the auditorium beyond. The wings contain offices, studios, rehearsal and practice rooms. Founded in 1932 with 40 students, the Conservatoire had by 1937 sections on piano playing, strings, wind instruments, singing, choral direction, history, theory of music and composition. Among the early Conservatoire teachers were M. Aladaú (1890-1972), M. Kulikovič-Ščahloú (1897-1969), M. Zinčuk (1904-1945) and A. Bahatyroú (b.1913). By 1988 there were 992 students, 18 established professors and 172 lecturers. Many distinguished former students have become leading lights in the firmament of Belarusian music: Ja. Hlebaú, L. Abeliovič, I. Lučanok, A. Mdivani, Dz. Smolski, and V. Roúda amongst others.

At the corner of vul. **Daminikanskaja** (*Enhielsa*) and vul. Valockaja (*Internacyjanalnaja E.*), on the south side, stood the old *Dominican Church* and Convent, originally endowed by Sofija Sluška, the widow of Kryštaf, Vajavod of Wenden, in 1605. The original Collegiate Church of *St. Thomas Aquinas* and convent are thought to have been built of wood, and to have perished in the great fire of 1615. It was then rebuilt of brick in 1622 in the Belarusian baroque style, on a site donated to the Order in the year of the fire by Count Piatro Tyškievič, Vajavod of Minsk (d. 1620). A façade in the Italo-Flemish style was flanked by two low towers with octahedral ogee cupolas; the main body of the church comprised a nave and side aisles. The interior was decorated with polychrome frescoes, and contained no fewer than 13 stucco or wooden side altars. A number of attempts have been made to provide outline reconstructions of the original, in particular by the artist V. Staščeniuk. The Church was extensively reconstructed after the devastating Russian and Cossack wars of 1648 and 1653. Its new organ later was among the many which delighted the Russian diarist Count P. Tolstoy, when passing through Minsk in 1697. The convent buildings were restored in 1703; the Church of St. Thomas was partially rebuilt in 1709, and again in the late 18th century in an austere and graceless style, when it was surmounted by a diminutive two-storied tower and turret.

In the adjacent Convent building Bishop Jakub Dederka resided for a few years after 1812, before being stripped of his office by Tsar Alexander, for having rallied to Napoleon and the Minsk Confederation. After the suppression of the 1863 Uprising led by Kastuś Kalinoúski,



the Dominican monks were in 1865 dispossessed of their convent, which was then given over for use as a military barracks and depot. In 1914 the legendary Princess Maria Magdalena Radzivil (1865-1945) successfully negotiated to purchase the church and monastery from the municipality at a price of 350.000Rs. to serve as a place of worship for Belarusan Catholics under her chaplain Fr Alexander Astramovič, the talented and patriotic poet Andrej Ziazula. She also intended to use the adjacent convent as the headquarters and administrative offices of her various Belarusan charities, including the recently formed *Litaść* Foundation to assist the families of Belarusan Catholic army conscripts. The agreement was subject to the Russian Governor Hirse's consent, but the Imperial Ministry of the Interior forbade the sale, no doubt on account of her well-advertised Belarusan nationalist views. Earlier in 1912, Princess Radzivil had inserted a notice in the newspaper *Minskoe Russkoe Slovo* (no. 117) publicly declaring that "as I consider myself a Belarusan of Lithuanian descent, like my husband, we have nothing in common with the Poles". As for Prince Nicholas, he had already been ostracised by Polish Society and expelled from his club in Warsaw, on account of his *chlopomanstwo* ('peasant-mania') and his 'russophile' interest in Belarusan welfare and folklore. Magdalena's concern for her 'fellow-Belarusans' (as she called them) led her in 1915 after her husband's death to greet the appearance of the first Catholic prayerbook in the modern Belarusan language - *Boh z nami*. "This little book, she wrote, opens a new era in our national history, and posterity will remember it and its author". Posterity will also remember the munificence of *Radzivilicha* ("Radzivil's lady"), as she was popularly known, the great-hearted Minsk aristocrat whose devotion and patriotism rendered the publication of the prayerbook possible. Among her other Belarusan charitable and philanthropic activities were the founding in Minsk of the Maurice Zarnouški *School for Underprivileged Children* and the *Minsk Benevolent Hospital*; the endowment of several Belarusan language schools (Uzda, Kamianiec and Kuchcičy); the promotion of rural shops and industries; the setting up of scholarships for Belarusan students; provision for the training of Belarusan-speaking priests (among them the future Bishop Časlaŭ Sipovič); the endowment of a Belarusan Uniate seminary in Rome (another "*affaire du collier de la Princesse*"); the financing of publications in the Belarusan language, including Bahdanovič's *Vianok* (1913), and giving material support to the Belarusan publishing house in St-Petersburg *Zahlania sonca i u naša vakonca*, as well as the Vilnia Catholic weekly *Bełaruš*. She founded the Library of the Belarusan Club in St-Petersburg, and repaired the



Lithuanian-Belarusan Chapel in Hackney, London. After her retirement to a Dominican convent in Fribourg, Switzerland in 1932, she continued her support of various Belarusan Societies in Poland, and in 1935 founded two kindergarten schools for Jewish children in Warsaw, to the indignation of the Polish press. She died in 1945.

In 1926 the Dominican convent buildings were taken over by the Soviet government and used as a fire-station.. They were damaged during the war, but were then demolished so that only the foundations (now covered over), and the traditional name of the vul. Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) remain to mark its site. Part of the area has been cleared for the construction of an obtrusively large Concert hall. Sadly vul. Jurieúskaja, one of the most historic streets of old Minsk, leading from the vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*) to vul. Ja. Kupaly, with the former **Sapieha Mansion** (c.1680) and the old musical cafe *Akvarium* ("The Aquarium"), built in an exotic Mauresque style, disappeared in the clearances. The Aquarium became in the early days of Bolshevik rule the Minsk Working Mens Club, where the composer M. Ravienski organised a large mixed voice-choir, and which the Russian poet Mayakovski is said to have visited.

Second only to the Radzivils, the Sapiehas were one of the oldest and wealthiest families of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś. Descendants of an ancient noble *bajar* dynasty from Polacak, the Sapiehas had a longstanding record of public service in Belaruś and in particular to the city of Minsk: Simeon Sapieha was *Pisar* ("Keeper of the Rolls") to Grand Duke Kazimier (c1440), and Chancellor Leú Sapieha (1557-1633) revised and published in Belarusan the fundamental code of laws known as the *Statute of Lithuania* (1588). Andrej Sapieha was Vajavod of Minsk in 1577, Mikola Sapieha Vajavod in 1588, Bohdan Sapieha in 1591, and again in 1616, Mikola Sapieha in 1638, and Úladzislau Sapieha in 1699. In the 17th century they acquired the title of Princes. Jan Sapieha was Castellan of Minsk in 1712. Their principal country estates were at Ružany and Kodzien, though they held other fiefdoms at Svislač, Dziarečyn, Zelva and elsewhere. Converted from the Greek rite to Calvinism in the 16th century, they reverted to traditional Christianity, but of the Latin rite in the 17th century. Their power and wealth were such that they aspired to become an independent principality; they shared with the Radzivils ambitions to the Grand-Ducal throne and from 1915-1918 had contacts within both the Lithuanian and the Belarusan national movements to that end. Judging by the remains of their residence in Minsk, it was by any standards a modest one, consisting of an outer stone staircase, leading to two large second level, vaulted cham-



bers, of which nothing has survived.

At the corner of vul. Daminikanskaja and the north side of vul. Valockaja (*Internacyjanalnaja E.*), opposite the Basilian Monastery to the west and the site of the old Dominican Church to the south stands a fine three storied (originally two-storied) 18th century palazzo known as the **Maniuška House** (no. 21), formerly the home of the composer Stanisław Maniuška (1819-1874) (pol. *Moniuszko*). Born at Ubiel in the nearby Ihumien district, the composer received his early schooling and musical education in Minsk with the Belarusian musician D. Stefanovič; he also resided there for some years, working with the poet V. Dunin Marcinkievič as his librettist on a number of operatic works including the first Belarusian Opera *Sielanka* ("The Peasant girl"), now lost, which received its first performance in 1852 at the nearby municipal theatre. During his residence in the vul. Valockaja in 1830-1831, musical evenings were held at his home, to which the *literati* and music-lovers of Minsk were invited. He later removed to another apartment on Cathedral Square until 1835, but that house no longer exists. Thereafter the composer divided his time between Berlin, Warsaw and Vilnia. The southern façade of the Maniuška house, sports two wrought iron balconies and a *porte cochere* gives access to a back yard with peculiar massive buttresses sustaining the rear wall.

The northern side of vul. Valockaja\*\* (*Internacyjanalnaja E.*) is one of the finest and most historic streets of the Upper Town. A particularly impressive, long asymmetrical façade distinguishes a two-storeyed, pitched roof houses (nos. 23) with two coach doors and a central entrance. A narrow intermediate cornice divides the street-level, plain rectangular fenestration from the more elaborate moulded frames and lintels of the first floor. The straight front is relieved by two projecting wrought iron balconies and a fasciated cornice. A pair of plain, two floored 19th century houses (nos. 25 and 27), with simple rectangular windows on both floors, the second having a narrow intermediate cornice, lead on to a monumental three storied *Apartment house* \* in a mid 19th century neo-classical style (no. 29). The symmetrical façade comprises a slightly projecting portico and two narrow wings, with a crowning entablature, cornice and rectangular pediments. The ground floor rustication is divided from the upper floors by a double intermediate cornice; a relatively modest entrance with a simple semi-circular fanlight is flanked by segmentally arched windows. The central section of the façade has four Ionian pilasters, linking the intermediate and roof cornices, and the wing sections are edged with masonry-like jambs. The second level fenestration consists of round arched windows, and



the third level with rectangular frames, except in the projecting sections where all the windows are round arched. The roof is pitched with a triangular gable and attic floor with asymmetrical fenestration at each end.

Another substantial 18th century building housed the historic **Old Municipal Library\***, a simple rectangular structure of four levels, including an basement and attic under the pitched roof, with triangular pediment-shaped gables and lucarne windows at each end. The rectangular windows are symmetrically disposed in tiers, those in the attic being of horizontal strip shape. There are intermediate cornices between the basement and ground floor, and between the ground and first floors. The stucco work at ground-floor level is rusticated with segmented lintel courses above each window, and a flight of outside steps leading to the main entrance at the side of the building. At the rear is a picturesque courtyard with another flight of stairs leading to a balconied gallery running the length of the second floor. Here was the first subscription library established in Minsk in 1842, numbering at first a few hundred books. The municipality was not sympathetic to the project, and it was only in 1900 that the Russian Governor approved the statutes of the Library, which continued here as the Minsk Regional Library until 1971. The foundation with a collection of more than 170.000 books then moved to new premises at vul. Hikala on Trinity Golden Hill, where more than 800 seats are available to readers.

On the east side of the Library another dwelling-house (no. 33) of the period on two floors with a sloping lean-to roof and a side entrance to the street, faces onto an inner courtyard of the 18th century **Vankovič mansion** (no. 33a.)\*\*. The present timber-frame structure, with its hipped roof and triangular pediment, resembles a single-storied country manor house: the ground floor fenestration of plain rectangular windows and three doors are asymmetrically disposed, and the front was decorated with eight plain columns and three pilasters on either side of the central section. The pediment has one central and two small lucarne attic windows. The ensemble appears on a number of old maps and watercolours dating from 1797, 1800, 1810 and 1917. It is presently scheduled for restoration as an annexe to the Belarusian national *Museum of Arts*.

In a house at the eastern end of the vul. Valockaja (*Internacyjanalnaja E.*) lived Ivan (1881-1919) and Anton Luckievič (Arms: *Navina*) (1884-1946), the founding fathers of the Belarusian Socialist Hramada, a moderate nationalist party which played a leading role in the renaissance of the Belarusian State in 1918. Their home occupied a



site in the Kupala park near the present Kupala museum building. Emilia, their sister remained in Minsk under the Soviets, and was twice imprisoned under Stalin because of her family connections; her lawyer husband Jelc was summarily shot by the Bolsheviks. Adjacent to the park stands the fashionable riverside *Žuravinka* \*\* cafe-restaurant, conveniently at hand for the footsore visitor.

The visit of down-town Minsk may be continued either by turning left along the vul. Zybyckaja (*Handlovaja*) to the Niamiha bridge over the Svislač to the **Trinity Suburb** \*\* (*Traeckaje Pradmiescie*), or by turning right to visit the Janka Kupala Park and the historic **City Centre**.

### **The City Centre \*\*\*. (Walkabout No. 3)**

*The Circus - Janka Kupala Park and Museum\*\* - Central Square - Congress Palace of Culture - The Boy and Swan Fountain\* - Jubilejny Dom BNR\*\*\* - Military Club\* - National Library \*- vul. Mahazijnaja - Republican Palace and Theatre of Youth - City Hall - Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Department of Agriculture - Hotel Svislač\* - Reimann Ladies College - vul. Valadarskaja - Vul. Padhornaja (Marxa) - National Museum \*\* - Maryjnski Lycee - Broúka Museum - Janka Kupala Theatre\*\*\* - Parliament House - Komsomol House - School.- of Management - Praspekt Skaryny - The Piščalaúski Fortress - The former Choral Synagogue - The Minsk Jewish Community\* - Central Post Office - Skaryna Avenue\*.*

A visit of the **City centre** \*\*\* is best begun from the precincts of the Svislač Bridge linking the river gardens with the Western approaches of Victory Square. Leaving the Metro station the visitor makes his way south-westward across river by way of the Svislač Bridge, from which there is one of the finest *views* \* in Minsk towards the ensemble of graceful neo-classical columns and spires (1946) on the right in vul. Špitalnaja (*Kamunistyčnaja*) with the conspicuous and impressive colonnade of the Minsk Garrison Headquarters.

On the left is the rotunda of the **National Circus of Belaruś**, built to a design by V. Žukaú (1959). Raised on three floors, the building turns a semicircular colonnade of corinthian pillars onto Skaryna Avenue, the rotunda being faced towards the rear with matching pilasters flanking three rows of plain rectangular windows. At roof level there is an entablature and crowning dentilled cornice, surmounted by finely proportioned saucer-dome. To the rear is a rectangular block of offices and storage space, with rehearsal rooms, accommodation for the artists and stalls for the animals. There is a entrance lobby with cloak-rooms.



The Circus auditorium consists of a *Ring* 13 metres in diameter, and seating accommodation for 1668 spectators, disposed as an amphitheatre. Belarusians have always displayed a lively interest in their wildlife, - the country's forests forming the natural habitat of the European bison, the lynx and the bear amongst others. Shows by jugglers, acrobats and clowns with performing animals (*Skamarochi*) were standard entertainments in the castles of noblemen and at city Fairs and Markets from mediaeval times, and contemporary records from the 16th and 17th centuries mention a few names of strolling entertainers - *Hierasim*, *Cit* and *Harman* of Bierascie, and *Bakač*, *Kurany*, *Micha*, *Achvier*, *Aniška* and others from Mahilou.

The Princes Radzivil founded on their estates at Smarhoni a famous *Academy* for the training of dancing bears, which flourished from the 17th to the beginning of the 19th century. The "training" involved the somewhat callous practice of placing the novice bear on a sheet of metal, which was then gradually heated by a fire from beneath, making the bear hop from paw to paw, whilst a drum was beaten to induce in the animal the appropriately rhythmic conditioned reflex. The engaging Captain Henri de Brandt, an officer in Napoleon's advancing *Grande Armee*, relates how his colleagues took a fancy to the performing bear-cubs in the village of Niomanica near Smarhoni and took away a few as mascots. Unfortunately the Captain returning to camp late at night tripped up over one of the larger specimens, who took it amiss and almost made short work of him. This and other similar incidents brought a mandatory end to the Frenchmen's attempts to train dancing bears. Performances took place in the Cathedral Square in the Upper Town of Minsk in the 18th century, and from 1884-1886 the *Nikicyn Circus* and other groups performed there in a temporary wooden ring. In 1903 and 1905 the French *Cirque Devigne* and the Italian *Truzzi* troupe visited Minsk, followed by the Italian *Ferrone Circus*, the French *Ecole de dressage* of Richard Ribeau, the Viennese *Hammerschmidt Circus* and the famous clown Úl. Duraú with his trained pigs, camels, rats and performing dog "Spitz". From 1959 the Belarusian Circus Company performed regularly until 1974, under the management of A. Šah and Ju. Averyna at the newly completed Minsk Circus, and also on European tour. Since 1975 the Circus has been used principally by visiting troupes. Many of those concerned with music and entertainment were Jewish, and it would be no exaggeration to say that *Litvak* humour and tradition influenced the development of Hollywood show-business and the cinema in America and the West, during the first half of the present century. A native of Minsk, Louis Levi Mayer (1885-1957) became in 1924 the partner of



the wise-cracking Sam Goldwyn in the well known cinematographic Corporation of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, makers of many movie classics.

Opposite the *Circus*, on the north side of the Avenue, lies the **Janka Kupala Park \***, laid out in 1949-1950 by I. Rudzenka, Ju. Hradaú and L. Levin as part of the landscaping of the river Svislač, and a part of the vul. Valockaja (*Internacyjanalnaja E.*) damaged during the Nazi-Soviet conflict. Planned as a formal Garden, the trees and shrubbery have matured, and its position on a sweeping bow in the river make this one of the most attractive parks in Minsk. The main entrance leads to a monumental statue of the poet Janka Kupala and the centrally sited *Coronet fountain \**, whence a formal parterre flower-bed extends to the river embankment, with a fine prospect across the Svislač to the neo-classical *Television House* in vul. Spitalnaja. The fountain depicts two nude girls, seated on a rock and bathing themselves. It alludes to the custom on mid-summers night for unmarried Belarusian girls to bathe in streams, rivers or lakes, to plait for themselves coronets of flowers and to float them downstream, often illuminated with little candles. The figures sculptured in 1972 by Anikejčyk, Humileúski and Zaspicki evoke just such a scene on *Kupala* night, and represent at the same time a play on the pseudonym adopted by the poet. The outer ring of water-jets converging on the central motif are likewise symbolic of a coronet. It was the revival of half-forgotten folk customs like *Kupala* night, the wakes of *Kalada*, and the ancestral rites of *Dziady*, which led Belarusian youth in the 1970's and 1980's to rediscover their national identity.

The monumental **Statue of Janka Kupala \***, cast in bronze on a low, rough hewn granite plinth by the same team of sculptors, commemorates the 90th anniversary of the poet's birth - and incidentally the thirtieth anniversary of his death in suspicious circumstances during the last War. Dressed in a traditional long linen shirt and girdle, a great-coat draped nonchalantly over his shoulders, the poet strikes a dramatic pose. From the granite base grows the mystical *paparoc-kvetka*, the legendary fern-flower of happiness which is said to bloom but once a year on midsummers night. Kupala's identification with the spirit of Belarusian folklore and his tragic death by defenestration, made him the symbol of Belarusian resistance to the bogus internationalism of the Bolshevik system, ultimately rejected by the people in 1991. His monument became a focal point of numerous protests and patriotic rallies; on 25th March 1990, the 72nd anniversary of the proclamation in 1918 of the Belarusian National Republic, a large crowd of demonstrators waved national flags and slogans: "Long live independent Belaruś", and joined in patriotic songs of protest. Nearby, on the northern side of the gar-



dens lies the site of the house in vul. Valockaja where two of the founding fathers of the independence movement, the historian Ivan and the writer Anton Luckievič, resided during their years in the Belarusan capital.

The Park is a favourite meeting place for artists and musicians. Painters, in official or unofficial exhibitions, paint or sketch portraits and display their works along the river embankment. Organised or spontaneous *concerts* of music and dancing take place, particularly at weekends and on holidays, and the splendid *views* \* across to the left bank, the National Opera House, the baroque towers of the old Upper Town, and an attractive small columned rotunda\*, make the gardens a sought-after place of recreation in the summer and autumn months.

The **Janka Kupala Museum\*\***, was initially established in 1945 as a memorial to the poet and after a number of moves, was finally housed on the site of his former home near the Luckievič house in vul. Valockaja, where he lived from 1927 to 1941. The building was constructed in a wooded parkland, in the form of a two-floored town villa to a design by I. Valadzko and V. Volčak, along strictly symmetrical lines. A flight of steps leads up to a framed entrance with an ornamental lintel on corbels, above which is set an ornamental plaque with a *bas-relief* portrait of Janka Kupala (1882-1942). Between plain pilasters and capitals are set two rows of windows on each side of the entrance, the lower tier of four rectangular with a horizontal lintel, the upper segmentally arched with lintels to match. Above the crowning cornice is a central rectangular pediment and low hipped roof. A spacious entrance hall and staircase is lit by a semi-circular window with stained glass by Ŭl. Stalmašonak (b. 1928), depicting the poet and illustrations from his works. The approaches to the exhibition rooms are similarly decorated with a series of thematic paintings by the leading artist M. Savicki (b. 1922), whose skill as a portrait painter is evident from his sensitive likeness of the poet, and from the privately owned picture of his own parents. What emerges from his didactic and weirdly depressing representations of "Who goes there? - Belarusans!", "The harvest", "Lullaby", "The haymakers", "Peasants", is a sense of profound pessimism and tormenting fear. This seems at odds with the ultimate hopefulness of Kupala's message as exemplified in his poems *Pieśnia maja* "My song" and *Maladaja Bielaruś* "Young Belarus": - "Thou hast flooded and poured, in a bright tale of life, / Through field, woodland, hill and vale streaming..., / From thy native flower-copses thy crown is made bright, / Like a swan's plumage, brilliant gleaming" (*trans.* Vera Rich). Some 20,000 exhibits illustrate his life, activities and work, and include manu-



scripts, books, photographs, documents, writings of colleagues and the works of artists. There is in all official accounts of his activities no allusion to Kupala's contribution to Belarusian religious hymnody, in which in collaboration with the priest-poet Kazimier Svajak prior to 1918, he is said to have played a significant part.

Returning to The Avenue by way of vul. Janka Kupaly with its well-appointed *Dom Vetaranaú* (Veterans Club) and *cafe* overlooking the Park, turn right towards Central Square, a *piazza* whose successive changes of name from *Alexander Square*, to *Stalin* and then *October Square*, has proved as confusing to the local citizenry as to the foreign visitor. Facing onto the piazza, but with a lateral frontage on the north side of Skaryna Avenue is the impressive Trades Union **Congress Palace of Culture\*\***. Elevated on four floors, the building was erected in 1954 to a design by V. Jaršou, with the general form of a classical Roman basilica enclosed with columns and attached pillars. The west front consists of a classical portico of twelve corinthian columns supporting an entablature and a triangular pediment, the side angles and apex of which are surmounted by statues on plinths. In the pediment is a sunken lunette with a sculptured group of figures representing Peace and Industry, modelled by the leading official artists of the day - A. Hlebaú (1908-1968), V. Papou (1923-1981) and S. Selichanaú (1917-1976). The inner wall of the portico is decorated with fluted corinthian pilasters and the arched entrance doors are flanked by double pillars. The extended frontage of the Congress Palace on the Avenue consists of three floors with horizontal rows of windows, the ground floor fenestration being of round arches and the upper floors of rectangular windows with moulded surrounds. There are moulded festoons between the third floor fenestration and the cornice. The building is faced with eighteen attached corinthian columns supporting the continuation of the portico entablature, three triangular pediments each topped by a finial on a central plinth, and a balustrade. The interior comprises a foyer on two levels, leading to an auditorium with 780 seats, and on the upper level to a ball-room. The building houses a library, conference-rooms, work-rooms and offices. There is also a *Buffet\** frequented by artists and intellectuals from the Artists club across the avenue in "Jubilee House".

In the hall of the Congress Palace the body of the national poet, Jakub Kolas (1882-1956) lay in state on 15th August 1956, and received the tribute of his fellow artists and many thousands of his countrymen, filing past his flower-bedecked catafalque. Here also in 1986 the inaugural meetings took place of the founding group of *Talaka* ("The Helping Hand"), which later played an important part in the democratisation



process, leading to the collapse of the Bolshevik establishment, and the proclamation of Belarusan Independence in 1991. Many were students - Siaržuk Vituška (history), Vincuk Viačorka (philology), Viktar Ivaškievic (technician), Aleš Suša (journalist) - sharing a common interest in the rediscovery of their country's identity and history, in particular through archeological digs and voluntary restoration work. Through their participation in the excavations of the Upper Town, they came into contact with the distinguished archeologist and historian Zianon Pazniak. The subsequent discovery of the mass graves of the victims of Bolshevism at Kurapaty shocked the nation and led to the establishment of the main opposition political party - the Belarusan Popular Front - in which Pazniak and Viačorka continue to play a leading part.

Immediately to the north of the Congress Palace, a modern and undistinguished functional building also facing onto Central Square, designed by Zaborski in 1967, houses the **State War Museum** of the Nazi-Soviet conflict during World War II. The austere three-storied façade surmounted by a narrow cornice and flat roof consists of nine slightly recessed panels with shallow moulded surrounds containing blocks of nine windows, three to each floor. A tenth panel nearest the Avenue, blind on two floors, contains the entrance doors to an exhibition of contemporary regalia, weaponry, partisan mementos and photographs illustrating the story of the conflict which left Belaruś in ruins and under alien rule. The north side of the Square, formerly the site of the *Sapieha Mansion* and the ancient Dominican Church of *St. Thomas Aquinas*, is now occupied by an obtrusive popular Concert Hall.

The buildings on the western side of vul. Daminikanskaja forming the west side of Central Square comprise the plain four-storied *Central Telegraph Exchange* (no. 6), built in 1962 to a design by the Belarusan-born architect U. Karol (1912-1980), with its fenestration set in segmentally arched vertical recesses, the ground floor windows being round-arched, the windows on all upper levels, rectangular. The wall of the lower three storeys is rusticated; a broken intermediary cornice separates them from the fourth level and crowning dentilled cornice. Another undistinguished administrative building (no. 4), with its rectangular fenestration, flat pilasters and crowning cornice (1962), claims no distinctive interior features, and may properly be described as "ripe for development". Reverting to the Avenue cross over by the Central Park Gardens.

The **Jubilejny Dom BNR\*\*\*** stands opposite the Congress Palace, in a garden recess on the south side of the Avenue (no. 26), backed



by the monumental Military Club in the vul. Kašarskaja (*Čyrvona-armejskaja*). It is one of the *hauts lieux* of Belarusan national history in the capital. This uniquely historical building was begun in 1910, and completed in 1913 as part of the Archepiscopal Residence, to designs by two eminent Imperial Russian architects V. Strujev and I. Fomin, to house the collection of the Orthodox Archbishop of Minsk, consisting of ecclesiastical ornaments and works of religious art, including a number of 16th and 17th century manuscripts (*Typikon, Apostol, Mineja*) and the archives of the Slucak Holy Trinity monastery. Formally it was known as the Church Archeological Museum, but as the year in which it was completed was that of the Tercentenary of the Imperial House of Romanov, it became popularly known as "Jubilee House" (*Jubilejny Dom*). The building formed part of an ensemble which included the *Residence* and the Russian Orthodox Holy Protection Cathedral (*Sv. Kryža - Pakrou*, since demolished). To this rather undistinguished church was brought in solemn procession each year, from the village of Krupicy, the magnificent wonder-working *Ikon* of the Krupeckaja *Theotokos*, venerated as a protection against the plague, and which is now preserved in the *Holy Ghost Cathedral* in the Upper Town.

Since the establishment in 1793 of the Belarusan Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Synodal (later Patriarchal) Church, the following hierarchs have been incumbents: Viktor Sadkovsky (1793-1796), Iov Potemkin (1796-1812), Serafim Glagolevsky (1812-1814), Anatolii Klimentevsky (1816-1832), Evgenii Bazhanov (1832-1834), Nikanor Klimentievsky (1834-1840), Antonii Zubko (1840-1848), Mikhail Golubovich (1848-1868), Alexandr Dobrynin (1868-1877), Evgenii Shereshilov (1877-1880), Varlaam Tcherniavsky (1880-1889), Simeon Linkov (1889-1912) and Georgii Yaroshevsky (1912-1920). The present incumbent is Mgr. Philaret Vokhrameev, Metropolitan Archbishop of Minsk and Slucak, Exarch of the Russian Orthodox Patriarchal Church.

Unlike the former *Pakrou* cathedral, the Church *Museum* was of attractive appearance as a rectangular L-shaped building with *art nouveau* features, raised on two stories with a lower garden-level floor. The main facade is orientated onto Skaryna Avenue, having on the eastward side a circular attached staircase-tower with slit windows and a moulded bracket, surmounted by a single graceful and unobtrusive onion-dome. On the westward side a small turret with narrow, rounded blind arches between lateral colonettes is topped by a gable-and-valley roof, incorporating a pavillion spire and finial. The main facade comprises an asymmetrically placed narrow portico extending from the entrance door to the eaves of the roof where it forms an ogee arched gable.



below which two larger first and second floor round-arched windows with stucco moulding interrupt the regular fenestration on either side. On the first floor the moulded plaster surrounds comprise ornamental lintels and lateral colonettes. Those on the second floor comprise triple arched moulded lintels, with lateral colonettes on either side. The western façade repeats the first and second floor patterns, but in symmetrical form. There is a geometrical patterned frieze and cornice round the eaves, and a similar cornice between the two floors. The contrast between the rust coloured roof, the yellow stucco walls and white mouldings together with the nicely balanced off-beat façade, make the ensemble refreshingly attractive, more reminiscent of some trans-Carpathian castle than a "pseudo-Russian" pastiche. The interior is of similarly pleasing appearance with diagonally rib-vaulted corridors and halls. On the first floor facing Skaryna Avenue, a spacious gallery with central columns and vaulting served to display some of the 1,363 exhibits of the museum; a second smaller hall served as a stock-room and for administrative purposes. The upper floor, reached by a spiral staircase in the corner tower, comprises a suite of rooms used as offices.

Following the First All-Belarusian Congress, opened in December 1917 in the adjacent Municipal Theatre, "Jubilee House" became the Government Office of the Council of the Belarusian National Republic. In February 1918 the military units of Col. Kastuś Jezavitaŭ had occupied the former Governor's Residence in Cathedral Square, but the *Rada* ("Council") subsequently removed to these more spacious and centrally placed premises. Here sessions of the Rada Government took place from March to December 1918, under four successive Presidents of the National Secretariat. Its members included many of the leading patriots and intellectuals of the time - J. Varonka (1891-1952), Col. Ivan Sierada (d.1930?), Piotra Krečeuŭski (1879-1928), Col. Kastuś Jezavitaŭ (1893-1946), Vasil Zacharka (1877-1943), Count Raman Skirmunt (1868-1943c), Radaslaŭ Astroŭski (1887-1976) and others. From here diplomatic delegations were dispatched to Kiev, to Warsaw, to Berlin and to the Baltic States seeking, and in a number of cases obtaining recognition for an independent Belaruś. A. Smolič as Minister for Education promoted an ambitious programme for setting up a Belarusian Conservatoire of Music, opening Belarusian language schools and organising a Skaryna Quadracentenary exhibition to mark the printing in Prague of his *Bivlija Ruska* (1517-1519).

The first Belarusian postage stamps are believed to have been adopted here by Post and Telegraph Minister Karač, and later printed in Kaunas. Designed in denominations of 1, 2 and 5 roubles they de-



picted Francis Skaryna (1485c-1550c.), whose quadracentenary fell in 1917, the *Pahonia* State emblem of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś, and the Ploughman, symbolising the Belarusan cultural revival of the *Naša Niva* ("Our cornfield") era. Much of the editorial work of the Belarusan democratic press of the period - "Varta", "Volnaja Belaruś" and "Krynica" - was done at *Jubilejny Dom*. In 1920 the house was renamed *Belaruski Dom*.

The influential Belarusan Princess Maria Mahdalena Radzivil (1864-1945), cold-shouldered by the radical-socialist faction of the *Rada*, who planned to break up the vast estates of the aristocracy, is said to have been a visitor to Government house, particularly in May 1918, during the brief premiership of her old friend Count Skirmunt (1868-1944); her Minsk residence was close by in the vul. Zacharava (now Skaryna Avenue). She had good family connections with the Imperial Austrian Court, and knew the German General Erich von Falkenhayn, whose Xth Army had occupied a large part of Belaruś after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Her Belarusan steward at Kuchčyce, Justin Muraška reminisced how she scolded the General over his Army's requisitioning of local farmers' livestock, threatening to complain to the Kaiser, and refusing permission for his troops to take wood from her forests. Whether on that occasion Falkenhayn ungallantly reminded her of the 30 waggon-loads of pedigree cattle previously requisitioned by the Tsar's army from Kaiser Wilhelm's estates alone in East Prussia, is not known (*Biełaruś*, no.39, 1914). The sending of the famous telegram to the Kaiser on behalf of the *Rada*, was said to have been done on the advice of Skirmunt and perhaps of *Radzivilicha*, in the hope that a conservative-style regime in Belaruś with fewer radical hot-heads might persuade the German High Command to give them recognition and arms, as they had done for Lithuania. It was related by Colonel Kastuś Jezavitaŭ how, on another occasion, she called with some matter requiring his assistance as the Military commander of Minsk. The waiting room of his *commandatura* was crowded but Princess Radzivil refused to be ushered through out of turn by his adjutant, even when those in front of her urged that her time was more valuable than theirs. Her reply was: "I am happy as a citizen to approach the government of my own country as an equal of all these others, who are now free people. As for my time, how can it be better spent than among my fellow citizens?" She duly took a seat and awaited her turn.

In December 1918 the *Rada* withdrew to Hrodna, but following anti-Soviet uprisings in Homiel and Niesviž, a number of its members were able to return to Minsk in the late spring of 1919 with the initial



support of the advancing Poles under Marshal Pilsudski. The authorities refused, however, to issue Princess Radzivil (or "Maria Ivanovna" as she was spitefully dubbed in some Polish circles), then in the Polish capital, with the requisite *laissez-passer* to return to her estates in Kuchcyce or to Minsk, as a result of which she was unable to retrieve 12 million roubles in cash and jewelry from her homes. The authorities also sought to expropriate her mansion in Warsaw, until she threatened to appeal to the British Consul, with whom she had connections as the widow of a former serving officer in the British Army, - Prince Nicholas Radzivil (1880-1914), of *Kitchener's Fighting Scouts* and Boer War fame.

Under the premiership of Anton Luckievič, the Rada resumed its sessions at the *Jubilejny Dom*: a Belarusan Army Commission was established, scientific lectures were also delivered, among others by the eminent grammarian, and later Academician Ja. Losik (1884-1940). On the 25th August 1919 the publicist Jadviha Lucevič, assisted by the poet and writer Zmitrok Biadula, began publishing the political and literary daily *Zvon* ("The Bell") from this address. The *Belarusan Schools Commission* for the Minsk area under the well-known patriot and educationalist S. Rak-Michaloŭski (1885-1937) also operated from here, and organised a *Belarusan Bookshop* and a free public *Reading room*.

After the return of the Soviets in 1920, the building continued as a *National Museum*, housing a number of important ecclesiastical and secular exhibits. Two of its most distinguished directors in its early days were Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski (1882-1938), the author of the monumental *Historyja Belaruskaj knihi* ("History of Belarusan bibliography", Koŭna 1926), and eminent statesman of the 1918 National Republic, who returned to Minsk in 1927; the other was the educationalist Symon Rak-Michaloŭski (1885-1937), appointed after Lastoŭski's arrest by the Bolsheviks in 1930, until his own incarceration in 1933 and subsequent disappearance. The building fortunately escaped destruction during the Nazi-Soviet conflict (1941-1945); in 1944 some of its religious exhibits and icons were, thanks to the intervention of Archimandrite Seraphim, restored by the Germans to the Holy Ghost Cathedral in the Upper Town.

With the formal constitution in 1957 of the National Museum and its subsequent establishment in vul. Padhornaja (*Karla-Marxa*), *Belaruski* or *Jubilejny Dom* was in 1963 converted into a Club for 'art operatives', with recreational facilities, a snack counter and a bar in historic surroundings, which attracted increasing numbers of *avant-garde* artists and progressive intellectuals. Once again in the 1980s, the building became a focus of national revival and a favourite venue for "informal"



associations and clubs. The vaulted ground floor bar serving wines and spirits, next to an inexpensive restaurant, proved especially popular, and was familiarly known as the *Mutnae voka* ("The Bleary Eye"). Among its habitués were a number of popular writers such as A. Syš, A. Hlobus, M. Klimkovič and others, who later founded a particularly active literary group - the *Tutejšyja* (approx. "Local yokels"), producing their own rotator-print 'unofficial' anti-Government publication - *Litaratura*. It was also frequented after 1988 by the opposition leader Zianon Pazniak and other senior members of the *Belarusan Popular Front* (BNF). The *Jubilejny Dom BNR*, together with its history of the great men and women who met and worked here, has become an integral part of the national *epos*, and is well worth a visit. By way of curious historical footnote, the unique symbolic role of *Dom BNR* in Belarusian history was marked by the National Rada in exile as long ago as 1952, with the issue of a commemorative postage stamp.

Forming part of the same group of ecclesiastical buildings as the *Jubilejny Dom* was the *Archepiscopal Residency*, which was also to become associated with the national movement in recent times. Built originally as the consistory of the Minsk eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church (est. 1795), it also served as the Archbishop's residence, before serving to house the ecclesiastical museum in 1908, prior to the building of Jubilee House. A brick and stucco edifice, it dated from the mid-19th century, and in its original form it consisted of a rectangular building on two floors, with a hipped roof and cornice; in the centre of the façade there was a diminutive ogee gable with an ornamental stuccoed roundel. The entrance-door was situated in one of a pair of symmetrical narrow, round-arched porticos which broke the line of the cornice; in its place the other portico had a window. The upper level of the porticos, above an intermediate cornice were a pair of round-arched windows and above a stucco roundel, the whole within a larger single-arched moulded surround. The ground-floor level was horizontally rusticated and lit by twelve segmentally arched windows with plain moulded surrounds; those of the upper floor were rectangular with projecting lintels. Here, it is said, the composer Mikola Ravienski (1882-1953) boarded as a chorister in the Orthodox Archepiscopal choir from 1892-1901, being able to return to his home only once in five years.

In 1918 the building was used for secular purposes, probably as an annexe to *Jubilejny Dom*. Later in 1920 the "former Archepiscopal residence" was the editorial address of the journal *Volny Sciach* ("The Free Banner") published by Zmitrok Biadula under the auspices of the Commissariat for Education of the BSSR. In 1934-1939 the Residence was



remodelled, and again restored after the war in a simplified and felicitous form, with an unbroken horizontal roof level cornice. The Residency was regrettably cleared to open up the view of the present Parliament, and only the smaller Archierarchical Consistory adjacent to *Jubilejny Dom BNR* survives as the Belarusan Army Museum.

South of the intersection of Central Square with Skaryna Avenue lies the peaceful haven of **Central Park Gardens**, with its avenues of maple and linden trees and its famous fountain. At the beginning of the 19th century the locality was waste land, but in 1836 this was cleared and was for a time given over for use as a suburban emporium - the New market, extending from the former ramparts on the present avenue, all the way down to the Dynamo Stadium and the old Jewish cemetery. Here bulkier goods such as firewood, barrels, baskets, seed grain, and bulk vegetables such as potatoes and beets were sold, with the cattle and poultry market near at hand. Further to the West lay the horse-fair grounds, and in between a great traffic jam of dray-carts and carriages - "an appalling chaos", according to Špileŭski. Part of the area was with subsequently laid out as gardens known as *Alexander Square* with diagonal and peripheral pathways; a Russian *Alexander Nevsky Chapel* (1869) was cleared earlier in the present century. The square has for well over a century served as a popular recreational area and convenient city-centre meeting place. In the middle of the Park stands the famous fountain with its statue of the **Boy with the Swan\***, as inseparably associated with Minsk as *Eros* is to London, the *Little Mermaid* to Copenhagen and the *Mannekin-pis* to Brussels. Erected in 1874 to commemorate the completion of the Minsk water system, the bronze group depicts the small nude figure of a boy with a swan, beating its wings and about to take flight. Both figures appear to be searching the heavens, and the boy's hand is raised as if to shade his eyes from the sun; round the edge of the pool four bronze frogs (no longer extant) spouted water into the pool. The design is attributed to Bernini, and is thought to represent Cupid come to retrieve one of the swans, broken loose from the celestial chariot of Venus, in order to bathe for a moment in the cooling waters of the Minsk fountain. The statue was badly damaged during the Nazi-Soviet conflict, but was remodelled by the leading Belarusan sculptor Z. Azhur; it has since on occasion been vandalised by late night revelers. At the south-western corner of the Square, a grandiose public convenience in the Louis XV style is said to have been erected as a replica of a local mansion by an architect disappointed at the treatment he had received at the hands of the owner.

Facing the square on its Eastern side is the monumental **Military**



**Club\*\***, erected in 1939 by the versatile Belarusan architect Jazep Langbard, and remodelled after World War II. It is bounded by the Avenue to the north, vul. Skabaleúskaja ( *Čyrvonnarmejskaja* ), to the east, and vul. Padhornaja ( *Karla Marxa* ) to the south. Originally conceived as a club for Soviet army personnel, it was renamed as a centre for officers from the united services. The appearance of the building, particularly its western façade, is a restrained form of the Chicago-school monolithic style launched by Frank Lloyd Wright in c.1908. ( *Unity Temple, Bach house* ). The eastern façade is scrappy and ill-proportioned, with two misplaced constructivist towers marring the overall effect. The Park front however is a classic of its kind, and an improvement on the earlier 1935 design. Two projecting wings, together with a set-back front, have the form of a Greek letter P. Closely set vertical columns extend up four floors along the facades of the central front and the two wings, and support a massive entablature, cornice and flat roof. The pattern is broken by narrow areas of vertical fenestration and plain concrete panels from base to entablature. In the centre of the wings set above two rectangular black marble porticos is a vertical row of windows, and on the fourth floor of each wing a chunky balcony supported by geometrical corbels. It successfully combines *art-deco* monolithic functionalism with a more humane neo-classical order. The interior is well-appointed with formal lobbies, conference rooms, a library, a cinema and concert hall with 800 seats, gymnasium, swimming-pool, a theatre with 1000 seats and a restaurant. The foyer, galleries, theatre and swimming-pool are decorated with sculptures and didactic bas-reliefs by A. Bembel ( "The Violinist", "The Athlete", "The Pilot" and "The Tank driver" ), and A. Hlebaú. Recently, limited public access has been permitted to the theatre and restaurant, though of course the cuisine is no longer up to its former exclusive clubman standards.

Not far from the Military club on vul. Skabaleúskaja ( *Čyrvonnarmejskaja* ) lies the corpus of the **Belarusan National Library**. (no. 9), another functional building erected in 1932 to a constructivist design by the eminent Belarusan architect H. Laúrou (1895-1967). Its asymmetrical facade comprises regular rectangular fenestration on four floors, with a bow-fronted central portico consisting of concrete piers, supporting an entablature a semi-circular glazed gallery and a plain crowning cornice. The interior comprises an entrance vestibule, twelve reading rooms including a main hall with 500 seats, stock rooms and administrative offices. The Library was established in 1922 as the Belarusan State and University Library; in 1926 it became an independent National library, and by 1932 its holding exceeded one million titles. The



Library sustained heavy losses in the course of the Nazi-Soviet conflict, though many books were recovered or replaced after the war, and by 1987 the Library housed in excess of 6.500.000 titles. Since 1924 the institution has published a *Letapis Druku Belarusi* ("Chronicle of Belarusian Printed Books") and maintained a cartothèque and Catalogue; it also publishes a bibliographical monthly bulletin "New Books in Belaruś" and a yearbook "Librarianship in Belaruś". More than 40.000 readers use the Library each year. Its holdings comprise many old and rare publications of the classics of Belarusian literature and learning, including printed works by the Renaissance scholar F. Skaryna (1485-1550c.) and P. Mscislaveć (fl. 1560-1575). The National Library also operates an international exchange of publications with over 170 Libraries in 27 countries, including Belarusian Libraries and Scientific Institutions overseas. During the German occupation, the Library served for a time as the headquarters of the *Belarusan Central Rada*, headed by Radaslaŭ Astroŭski (1887-1976).

**The Intermediate school** (no. 4) is another constructivist stucco building on vul. Skabaleŭskaja (*Cyrvonaarmiejskaja*), designed by H. Jakuška in 1936. The school is on a corner site at the intersection with vul. Mahazynaja (*Kirava*), immediately opposite the National Library, and is L-shaped with four floors and a bow-fronted and colonnaded portico over the corner entrance. At right angles it adjoins a rectangular wing with a matching colonnade and projecting fourth-floor gallery, surmounted by a crowning cornice and parapet. The plain rectangular fenestration on the side-wings has moulded frames giving the ensemble a modernist classical appearance. It comprises an auditorium of 1005 places, class-rooms, recreation rooms, a library, a cinema, a restaurant and a swimming-pool. The interior is decorated with *bas-reliefs* \* in the foyer, entrance staircase and swimming-pool by the leading and proficient socialist-romantic sculptors of the time, A. Bembel and A. Hlebaŭ at the intersection of vul. Mahazinaja (*Kirava*) and vul. Skabaleŭskaja.

Turning right into vul. **Mahazinaja** (*Universiteckaja, Kirava*) the visitor enters the Minsk equivalent of London's Whitehall or Berlin's Friedrichsstrasse, where a number of important ministries and Government offices are located. A particularly fine row of 19th century dwelling houses has been demolished to improve the view of the rear of the new Belarusian Parliament, a modern classical block commenced by A. Voinaŭ and U. Varaksin in 1939 and completed in 1947.

On the right, in vul. Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) in a substantial three-storeyed stuccoed building with a simple façade of regular fenestration, cornice and plain rectangular pediment (no 27), formerly the



*Writers Union* [no longer extant] the German General Commissioner for Belaruś, Wilhelm Kube established his *Residence* in 1941. A demoted Gauleiter, an open admirer of the Jewish composers Mendelssohn and Offenbach, and a keen amateur of Belarusan folk-music, he called on the services of a local choir for his social soirees attended by Italian, Romanian and Hungarian staff officers off duty from the Front. There is some doubt as to who ultimately was responsible for Kube's assassination here in 1943, when a bomb, planted by a Belarusan cleaning woman Elena Mazanik, exploded beneath his bed as he slept. His death was greeted by Himmler as a "blessing" for Germany, though it led to an increase in repressions against the civilian population.

Opposite the now vacant site of the *Writers Union*, the Minsk-born architect H. Zaborski's (b.1909) design for the *Pianier* ("Pioneer") **Cinema and Puppet Theatre** (1965) (no. 20) was produced with evident relish. A low two floored façade, with symmetrical lateral entrance portals, is a rollicking blend of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie-style and Maya Mexican, coming as a welcome relief from the staid modern classicism of the surrounding municipal office-blocks in the Grand manner. The glazed frontage, intermediate plain cornice and ribbon of stained glass entablature under a plain crowning cornice, when lit up at night make an impressive and colourful display. The interior consists of two auditoria of 400 seats each; there is some interesting wrought-iron work in the foyer, and a panel depicting "Happy Youth".

At the corner of vul. Mahazinaja (*Kirava*) and vul. Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) on the south side is the Republican **Hall of Youth\*** (*Palac pijanieraú i školnikaú*), originally constructed in 1937 to a design by Voinaú and Varaksin, but later rebuilt by the architect in 1947-1952 (no. 16). An extension was added in 1962. Raised on three floors, the building is asymmetrically P-shaped, with as its most distinguishing features a central Roman-style portico with a projecting colonnade of six Corinthian pillars supporting a massive rectangular pedestal, comprising a crowning cornice and parapet. A lateral wing has a bow front and contains a sports hall, and a number of rooms for group activities; the main building houses the auditorium of the **Belarusan Youth Theatre**. The interior is lavishly decorated with sculptured friezes and bas-reliefs depicting scenes of youth activities, including works by Hlebaú, Achremčyk, Davidovič and Stalmašonak. Among the facilities of the Hall of Youth are classrooms of choreography, sculpture and singing, a library, a collection of games, a puppet-theatre and rehearsal rooms. A third-floor hall of choreography has a painted ceiling on the didactic theme "Friendship between nations" in the official socialist-romantic



style by Achremčyk.

Further to the west along the vul. Mahazynaja there is, on the left at the intersection with vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*), an oddly white, clinical-looking former Bolshevik city hall on five floors with fifteen arcaded, vertical window-recesses. Designed by a team of architects led by L. Levin (1979), the building now houses the Belarusian **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, which was able to move into these more spacious premises from its former site in Government house on Independence Square after 1991, when the Bolshevik party was overthrown and its assets confiscated. Independent Belarusian diplomatic activity began in 1915 when the nationalist leadership adhered to the Vilnia Confederation for the restoration of the Old Grand Duchy and attended international conferences in Stockholm and Lausanne in 1916. Belarusian participants included Anton Luckievič, Vaclaú Lastoúski and Princess Mahdalena Radzivil. The Princess, acting as diplomatic agent for the BNR was engaged between 1917 and 1918 in a number of missions between Minsk, Moscow and Switzerland, where she was in contact with the British authorities. During 1918 Belarusian diplomatic missions were set up in Moscow, Helsinki, Kaunas, Riga, Tallinn, Kiev, Berlin and Constantinople. During the early years of Bolshevik rule their Minsirty for Foreign Affairs was installed in the former Jesuit college in the upper town of Minsk, whilst the Belarusian National Republic conducted a rearguard action for International recognition through Colonel Jezavitaú's very active Diplomatic Military Mission in Riga and the Rada Headquarters in Prague and Berlin. After Lastoúski's failed attempt in 1920 to visit London, a BNR Mission led by Žydloúski and David Anekstein reached England and rallied some support among Belarusian emigres and in Jewish circles. The most important step towards the establishment of Belaruś as an international entity came in 1946 with the admission of the Belarusian Republic under the signature of K. Kisialoú as a founding member of the United Nations Organisation. Independent Belaruś now has established Diplomatic relations with an ever-increasing number of countries, including the United States, France, Germany, Great Britain, Poland, China, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Italy, Turkey and India.

A short way up vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*) on the left is the ensemble of the **National Art Museum of Belaruś\*\*\***. This institution was founded in 1939, and restored after the Nazi-Soviet conflict during World War II. The building itself was erected to a design by M. Baklanaú in 1957; rectangular in shape it has two floors and a neo-classical façade in an *Ecole des Beaux Arts* style. The main façade consists of a central colonnaded portico and two side sections, with a concave arched



niche flanked by lateral colonnettes, and surmounted by classical triangular pediments. In each niche on a pedestal is an allegorical statue representing *Painting* and *Sculpture*, by P. Bielavusaú, S. Adaškievič and Roberman. A massive crowning cornice with a central pediment-shaped parapet, decorated by four decorative bas-relief mouldings, surmounts the entire frontage. The truncated apex of the pediment bears an allegorical sculpture representing *Glory* by A. Bembel. The entrance porch is set between four Ionic columns, and the side sections are flanked by pairs of pilasters in similar style.

The interior centres round a two storied vestibule approached from outside through an entrance lobby opening onto five exhibition halls on the ground floor; a dividing staircase leads up to a colonnaded second level gallery, giving access to a further five exhibition halls. The museum's available floorspace is 1749 m<sup>2</sup>, and its holdings and those of its annexes (the *Raubicki Museum of Belarusan Folk art* \*\*, the *Bialynicki-Birula Museum* \*\* in Mahiloú and the *Huryna Museum* in Mozyr ) exceed 19.000 works. In addition to its extensive holding of Belarusan works there is a representative collection of works by artists from other European countries. Taken in conjunction with the *Museum of ancient Belarusan Culture* \*\*\* attached to the Academy of Sciences, it provides the most comprehensive survey to date of Belarusan art. The exhibits are well presented, with sculptures, paintings and objets d'art imaginatively displayed in glass fronted cabinets alternating round the walls and intervening floor-space.

Of particular interest to most visitors is the collection of early Belarusan paintings and sculpture. The earliest and perhaps the most typical examples of Belarusan iconography in the Middle Ages have survived as frescoes and wall-paintings in Polacak at the St. Saviours and St Euprosyne Church, and in Polish borderland cities such as Krakow, Lublin and Sandomir. No copies are as yet on display to show the characteristically Byzantino-Gothic works of Master Andrej z Litvy, Court iconographer to Grand Duke Jahajla (1348-1434), adorning the walls of the Chapel Royal of Lublin Castle. The icons of *Our Lady Hodigitria* from the Slucak region (late 15th century) and of the *Smalensk Theotokos* (16th century) are more sombrely Byzantine, with South Slavic influences. The Icon of *St. Paraskieva* (late 16th century), with its increasing naturalism and richly brocaded or geometrically patterned gilt background, derived from Trans-carpethian and West European precedents, and the vigorous, strangely attractive outline or cartoon-style of the roughly contemporary *Christ Pantocrator* and *Hodigitria* from Trinity Church, Žytkavič (1640), are illustrative of two trends which



were to endure simultaneously, until the Russian campaigns of assimilation in the 19th century. The astonishing 1640 icon from the Mahilou region of *Our Lady Hodigitria of the Unfading Flower*\*\* with its finely graduated coloration, exquisite draughtsmanship and its ornate coronal and gilt floral motifs, represents the high-water mark of late Renaissance iconography in Belarus.

The seventeenth century witnessed a further move towards an iconographical merger of the divine and natural worlds. Piotr Jaúsejevič's *Nativity of the Theotokos* (1649) remains traditional in form, with the world beyond the window being presented as if it were the brocaded vestment of the Divinity. The pillows against which St. Anne leans, the head-dresses of the womenfolk and the folded linen on the child's cradle are all distinctively emboidered with Belarusan folk cross-stitch in red and black thread.

With the Master of Malarita\*\* (fl. 1650), arguably the greatest of the artists of this period, Belarusan iconography achieves a further mystical fusion of the natural and supernatural worlds. The faces and postures, more realistically portrayed than in the strict Byzantine tradition, still retain a calm dignity, and abstractedly spiritual quality, though there is a calmness in the rectilinear disposition of the figures in the Icons of the *Dormition*, the *Protection* and the *Transfiguration* which contrasts with the rhythmic curves and movement of the iconography of the Novgorod school. But there is also an awareness among Belarusan icon-painters that Christ, the Theotokos and the Saints lived in a world of flowers and fruits, pots and pans and bedlinen, and that these too could be a means of bringing the worshipper to a better understanding of the message *Z nami Boh* ("God is with us"). The Malarita *Birth of the Theotokos* (1648-1650) brings the intimacy of domestic life - the offering of gifts to the mother, washing the baby, making up the rocking cradle, and Joachim being handed the infant child to hold - into a divine dimension. Similarly in a late 17th century *Dormition* in the style of the Master of Malarita, St. Peter censes the body of the Theotokos, as the priest does around the *plascanica* in churches of the Greek-rite, with the shroud all sprinkled with petals and flowers in accordance with the Belarusan folk custom, whilst four apostles robed as Byzantine Bishops recite prayers from open service books. Here the believer is being consciously reminded of the unity between the sacred scene and its perpetration in the ceremonies of the Church; he finds himself being drawn, as it were, into the icon. Elsewhere the monogrammist M.V. in an icon of the *Protection* shows, gathered round St. Romanos, a King and princes dressed in ceremonial armour, or bearing sashes and Maces of office of



the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś. The pattern is, again, one of unity between the spiritual and the physical worlds.

This is far removed from the general charge of "Latinisation" levelled by synodal purists at Belarusan iconography. In a more rustic outlined icon of the *Nativity* dating from 1740, the Master of Latyhava\* shows the ox and the ass surreptitiously nibbling at some of the hay on which the infant Jesus lies; his vigorous style is also represented by an icon of *Our Lady of Minsk*, in which a cosmic Infant Christ and the Virgin appear robed in stars, and icons of *Christ Pantocrator*, the *Protection of Our Lady*, and the *Coronation of the Theotokos*, all from the mid-18th century. The latter icon does contain popular western motifs - Christ revealing his wounded side, the Virgin kneeling with hands crossed on her breast, the Holy Spirit in the likeness of a dove, and God the Father with a Trinitarian triangle as a halo, wearing a three crowned papal tiara. Yet this fusion of Greek and Latin elements is remarkably harmonious and convincing, vesting the icon with a uniquely Belarusan character. In the same way the traditional Belarusan wooden churches of the period show no specifically 'Orthodox' or 'Catholic' features. Divisive onion domes and neo-Gothic steeples came later, as entirely alien impositions on the Belarusan landscape.

The similarity between many of the icons derives from the influence of Belarusan lithography which flourished in the wake of Skaryna's printing activities in Prague and Vilnia. Many engravings produced at the printing house of the Mamonič brothers, and the monastic presses of Eúie and Kuciejna - in particular the richly illustrated Kuciejna *Trifologion* (1647) served as models for Belarusan iconographers in the 17th and 18th centuries. The names of these have seldom been recorded, but by the 18th century the works of the Masters of Latyvaha, Šarašava and Zielava are readily identifiable (the latter appears to have been influenced by the style of the German Renaissance) and the names of highly competent artists such as the Monogrammist M.V., the almost lyrical Markianavič and the Italianate Silinič are at least partially known.

The coloration of Belarusan icons is also quite distinctive, with an accent on various shades of red, white and blue against a gold or silver brocaded background; particularly fine examples are the *Hodigitria of the Unfading flower* (1640), the *Dormition* (last quarter 17th century), the *Three angels of the Holy Trinity* (last quarter 17th century, with flowers and fruits in triad form), *The Apostles Peter, Bartholomew, Paul and John* (c1700), The Master of Stolin's *Holy Wisdom and the angelic choir* (c.1700), the *Three angels of the Holy Trinity* (second quarter 18th century), the Master of Latyhava's *Theotokos of Minsk* (1744) and



the *Angels of the Trinity*, the *Protection* and the *Annunciation* by Markianovič (1761).

In the field of secular art, the full scope of the Belarusian contribution has yet to be ascertained. Early painting from the 16th century onwards was largely related to portraiture and iconography, votive icons occasionally requiring the portrait of the donor to be included. The chancel of the Chapel Royal in Lublin (Poland) was decorated by Master Andrej (c.1400) with frescoes of the Passion of Our Lord, and an equestrian portrait of the Grand-Duke Jahajla, founder and benefactor of the church. Some of the finest early portraits painted in Belarus are to be found in the great Radzivil collection, now exhibited in the Belarusian National Museum of Art, and depicting *Cardinal Jury Radzivil* (1590); *an Unknown Lady* (c.1610) in a lace collar; Princess Hryziela Sapieha (1630s); Prince Januš Radzivil (1630s); the two Princesses *Catherine and Maria Radzivil* (1646) by Johann Stretter; *Prince Januš Radzivil* in a long kaftan and cloak, wearing a nobleman's traditional silk brocade girdle from the Slucak manufactory; *Michal Kazimir Pac* (c.1667) Hetman of the Grand Duchy; *Andrej Zaviša, Pisar* (Keeper of the Rolls) of the Grand Duchy and *Starosta* (Lord Lieutenant) of Minsk, whose two sons Jan and Krystaf both in turn became *starosty* of Minsk; the latter was buried in a chantry chapel of the Maryinski Cathedral in 1721. An unusual portrait by Louis de Sylvestre of *Franciška Fleming* (1720s), daughter an ancient aristocratic family from Flanders established in Belarus, depicts her young African page in a stylish scarlet gown, wearing a Slucak brocade *pojas* (girdle). Similarly dressed in a scarlet tunic, *pojas* and bearing a staff of office is *Ihnat Kiežhajla Zaviša*, Marshal to the Court of the Grand Duchy and *Starosta* (Lord Lieutenant) of Minsk and Babrujsk, one of the benefactors of the Dominican convent in Minsk and a forebear of the patriotic Princess Maria Mahdalena Radzivil, nee Zaviša (1863-1945). Also impressive is the portrait of Michal Kazimir Ahinski in powdered periwig and blue sash. Most of these portraits appear to be the work of Dutch and north German artists, though it cannot be excluded that some are the work of Belarusian painters.

The fiction to which officialdom adhered until recently, that Belarus and her culture owed their existence to the Great October Revolution, and that all previous works of art were alien products of Lithuanian feudalists and Polish *Pany* (aristocrats), has resulted in a general impoverishment in holdings of early Belarusian works of art, which were simply distributed to Polish, Lithuanian, Russian and Ukrainian museums. This impoverishment is visible in the paucity in the National Museum of works by 18th and 19th century artists in Minsk such as Jan



Damel (1780-1840), who lived and died in Minsk, Jazep Aliaskievič (1777-1830) who is represented by two paintings - group portrait of a *Lady in a white dress with four children* (1813) and *Portrait of a girl*, and Valencij Vankovič (1799-1842), born of an old Belarusian family with a long connection with the capital.

The leading Belarusian artist of the era was the portraitist and still-life painter Ivan Chrucki (1810-1885), who was the son of a Uniate priest. The *Portrait of the artist's son*, holding a basket of grapes, and a still life of *Game, vegetables and mushrooms* represent the only available work of this appealing master of the Belarusian domestic scene. Much nineteenth century landscape painting was produced by artists but most of it has also been dispersed; a fine local view of evening in the Minsk countryside is by one of the prominent artists of the end of the century, Apalinaryj Haraúski (1833-1900). There are unfortunately few or no works by Vikencij Dmachoúski (1807-1862), Kazimir Alchimovič (1840-1917), Mikadzim Silivanovič (1830-1918), Henrych Vejsenhof (1859-1922), Stanislaú Bohuš-Siestrżancevič (1869-1927) and the *tutejsy* ("local yokel") artist and friend of Vaclaú Lastoúski, Ferdinand Ruščyc (1870-1936).

Among the artists of the transition from the impressionism of Ruščyc and Bohuš-Siestrżancevič to the era of socialist-romanticism were the Whistler-like V. K. Bialynicki Birula (1872-1957) and V. Kudrevič (1884-1957). The black and white water colours of Arkadz Astapovič (1896-1941), as exemplified in his *March* (1923), are characteristic of the intellectual ferment of the early days of revolution. The brilliant Viciebsk School of Art associated with the names of Jury Pen, K. Malevič, Marc Chagall, S. Judovin and other artists of world renown - is poorly represented, perhaps as going counter to the erstwhile official image of Belaruś as a peasant culture. The inspiration and deep rooting of the movement was, however, unquestionably in the city of Viciebsk and its specifically Belarusian cultural heritage, as shown in the early works of Marc Chagall.

Much of the work produced by artists during the period of Bolshevik rule is concerned with didactic and propagandistic themes in the style of "socialist realism", and painted to order, often by artists of considerable merit. All too often however, the message is either crudely delivered, as in Ramanaú's improbable *Kanstancin Zaslonaú at Orsha railway station* (1952) and Šibnioú's *Prisoners of War* (1947), or verges on romantic apotheosis, as in *The Defenders of the Brest Fortress* by the Minsk born I. Achremcyk (1903-1971) and the idealised arrival of the Red Army in *Minsk 3rd July 1944* by Volkaú (1881-1964). A num-



ber of leading painters of this period have produced fine portraits such as M. Filipovič's *Ju. Hryhonis* (1927), I. Achremčyk's *U. Uładamirski* (1948), U. Stelmašonak's *Jakub Kolas* (1967) and *Hr. Šyrma* (1968), R. Kudrevič's *Self Portrait* (1979). Among the didactic artists M. Savicki (b. 1922) played a leading role, and his portrait of *Kupala* at the Kupala Museum in Minsk is a fine work. Many of his paintings however are disturbing representations of human anguish and torment, occasionally in a cosmic dimension, which seem to be more related to the artist's psyche, than with the world of reality.

Belarusian artists have been particularly successful in depicting the beauty and individuality of the countryside. Since painting *At the Mill* (1954) in an attractive figurative style V. Cvirka (b. 1913) has evolved a firmer more abstract approach in his *Prypiać* (1966), *Kaloža* (1969), *Nanča* (1969), *Harvest home* (1972) and *An Azure day* (1980). V. Hramyka (b. 1923) is another leading artist who has successfully evoked the lake and hill country of Belaruś with a vibrant luminosity in his colours: *The Red lands of Polacak region* (1970), *By the lake* (1972), *Foggy morning* (1974). Other distinguished modern landscape artists whose works are displayed at the Museum include S. Katkoŭ\*, F. Daraševič, R. Kudrevič, P. Danelia, A. Krol, M. Kasmačoŭ\*, D. Alejnik, and M. Kazakievič.

A number of sculptures by modern Belarusian artists including the "Big four" - Azhur, Bembel, Hlebaŭ and Seliachanaŭ - are displayed among the exhibits. Despite criticism of their compliance with ideological directives in much of their work, there can be no doubt that these graduates from the finest art-school in the land at Viciebsk, were all highly professional sculptors, who left to posterity such works of undisputed value as Hlebaŭ's *Francis Skaryna*, Selichanaŭ's *Portrait of of a miner* and Azhur's *Rabindranath Tagore*.

There are also displays of Belarusian 18th century glass from Ureččie and Naliboki, magnificent *brocade girdles*\*\* from the Radzivil manufactory in Slucak, gold medallions and chalices, in particular by the Master of Davyd Haradok, and fine sixteenth century glazed tiles. But among all these refined treasures of "the forgotten nation", the most spectacular is perhaps a superb pair of 18th century **Iconostasis Royal doors**\*\*\* with eight roundels and two stellar designs, held in what looks like a decorative frame of Celtic squares of twisted gold, surmounted by a crown, but all in fact made out of plaited straw. Other sculptors whose works are also on display are A. Šaciernik, S. Vakar, H. Muramcaŭ, A. Anikejčyk, U. Slabodčykaŭ, A. Hrube, and L. Davydzienka.

One of the most elegant examples of municipal architecture in post-



War Minsk is the **District Council Hall\*\***, an L-shaped *Petit-palais* in the French neo-classical style, occupying the corner site of vul. Felicijanskaja (*Kamsamolskaja*) and vul. Mahazinaĵa (*Kirava*) (no. 17). Built on four floors to a design by the talented architect A.P. Voinaŭ in 1953-1956, the central element is the attached octagonal corner tower joining the two wings at right angles. The ensemble is divided horizontally by two intermediate cornices, between the rusticated and semi-rusticated first and second floors. The main feature of the polyhedral tower is the attractive upper floor with its vertical round-arched windows between two floors, flanked by corinthian corner pilasters, crowning cornice, parapet and blue tiled cupola and diminutive lantern. On the side-wings, the upper floors also feature rectangular and arched fenestration between pilasters, cornice and parapet. The interior is elegantly appointed with an impressive vestibule and offices. The Council Chamber on two floors has a central cupola, and pairs of columns and pilasters. It is now the headquarters of the Community of Independent States.

The exuberant Italianate baroque of the **Ministry of Agriculture** contrasts agreeably with the restrained elegance of the adjacent *Council Hall*. Raised on four floors in 1952 to a design of P. Ivanoŭ as part of the plan to enhance the status of Minsk as a capital city, the Corinthian colonnaded façade has much in common with Duchan and Karol's *Central Post Office* on Skaryna Avenue. The exterior was remodelled by Varaksin in 1974 and the interior refurbished by the Minsk-born architect H. Zaborski (1909-1981). There is an intermediate cornice between the second and third floors, and a roof-level re-entrant entablature, crowning cornice and parapet. Apart from a rank of round-arched windows on the second level, the fenestration is rectangular; the windows on the third level and the central main entrance have horizontal moulded lintels. The central recess of the re-entrant parapet is decorated with a medallion of the State emblem of Belaruś. The interior is also decorated with stuccoed columns, pilasters, ornamental friezes, panels and rosettes.

Although of relatively recent date, the **Svislač Hotel \*** (formerly "Belaruś") (no. 13), has already acquired an aura of history. Situate at the corner of vul. Lošyca (*Valadarskaja*), it was built to a constructivist design with neo-classical elements by the versatile architect A. Voinaŭ in 1938. The central section of the L-shaped building on six floors is the most distinctive feature, with its bow-fronted tower comprising entrance doors, a colonnade of six plain cylindrical pillars flanking vertical windows on four floors, entablature, cornice, attic floor and balustrade. An intermediate cornice divides the rusticated ground floor from



the balconied fenestration of the first floor portico. On either side is a projecting rectangular turret with a pair of windows and balcony on each level, with crowning cornice, attic floor and parapet. Two side-wings on five floors have rectangular fenestration between plain pilasters. The interior comprises an oval entrance lobby leading to a foyer and the main staircase. In the wing facing vul. Mahazinaja (*Kirava*) a restaurant was installed in 1976-1978, decorated with eight octagonal columns and mouldings with floral motifs by the leading sculptor of his day M. Kerzin (1883-1979). Solid waitresses, akin to the London chop-house "City ladies", dispense good food and measured quantities of spirits, depending on the customer's demeanour. The festive appearance of the restaurant is enhanced by thick decorative panels of Minsk glass and wrought iron and a carved ornamental panel in the foyer in the socialist-romantic style depicting the folk-dance *Lavonicha* ("My lady Lavon") by the sculptor A. Hlebaú (1908-1968). The pleasant situation of the "Svislač" hotel in the city centre, facing a park made it a favoured rendez-vous for *literati* and "*avantgardistes*"; its bar was a favourite watering-hole of the convivial historical novelist Ŭł. Karatkievič (1930-1984). Here also the great Jewish actor Šloma Michoels spent his last night before his gruesome assassination by the Secret Police in 1948; his murdered body was twice run over by a van near the old Jewish cemetery to simulate an "accident".

To the left the **Dynamo Stadium\*** stands on a site comprising part of the old Jewish cemetery off the vul. Mahazinaja (*Kirava*), and was opened as a sports-ground in 1934. Rebuilt in 1939, it was damaged during the Nazi-Soviet conflict, reconstructed between 1947-1954, and again in 1978-1980 to meet the requirements of the Football Olympiad held in Minsk in 1980. The ensemble comprises a spacious oval arena, surrounded by an outer wall of continuous arcading of rounded arches and moulded stucco surrounds, with a broad upper ribbon-frieze of contiguous plasterwork semi-circles, picked out in pale blue against a brick-red background. Inner corridors and stairways give access to amphitheatrical ranks of seating. The arena, comprising a football field and surrounding racing track, together with courts for volleyball, basketball and tennis, occupy an area of 12 hectares. The main entrance, to a design by Baršč, is an elaborate baroque portico of three rounded arches, entablature and cornice raised on twin corinthian pillars and lateral squared pillars. Nearby a monumental piece of statuary by V. Zankovič (b. 1937), a leading official sculptor of the period, depicts a group of racing hurdlers (1980).

Apart from its role as a sportsground, the *Stadium* was the scene



of the first mass protest rally against the Bolshevik regime, called in Minsk by the Belarusian Popular Front on 19th February 1989, a year of escalating protest activity, with a display of the then prohibited national white-red-white flags and *Pahonia* ("The charging Knight") emblem, and the singing of patriotic songs.

The sport of **Football** was of relatively late development in Minsk; the first amateur club football match took place in June 1913 between the gymnastic association *Olympus* team and the shop-workers *Maccabees* sports club. Not surprisingly the gymnasts won 3: 0. Football matches on an All-Belarusian basis were first organised in 1919, and the first championship set up in 1922 as between teams from Minsk, Viciebsk, Barysaŭ and Orša. During the ensuing Soviet period there was no effective national championship in Belaruś, though Belarusian teams such as *Minsk Spartak* (colours: red-white-red) and *Minsk Dynamo* (colours: blue and white stripes) were consistently successful in the First Division League of the All-Union Championship, coming top of the League in 1983. The Football clubs from Bierascie, Viciebsk, Homiel, Hrodnia, and Mahiloŭ successfully maintained their positions in the Second Division. Among distinguished Belarusian coaches Edvard Malafiejeŭ of *Minsk Dynamo* became chief coach the All-Union Joint team, and also of the Olympic team of the former USSR. Famous Belarusian players have also made their mark in international football. Since Independence it seems likely that Belaruś, with a population of well over 10.000.000, will establish its own national Football League, and qualify for membership of the International Football Association.

Crossing the vul. Lošyca (*Valadarskaja*), on the right-hand or north side of the intersection with vul. Mahazinaja (*Kirava*), the visitor will note the reconstructed red brick **Art nouveau ensemble** of the former offices of the Libava-Romny Railway Corporation (no. 11). Raised on four floors with an attic level, the façade on the south side comprises a centre section with vertical fenestration in five recessed panels surmounted by an ornamental crowning cornice broke by a segmentally arched pediment. The side wings are asymmetrical with windows grouped in twos and threes, side balconies on the third and fourth levels and a bordering patterned band of small stucco squares. The original tiled dome at the corner of the roof, damaged during the Nazi-Soviet conflict, has not been restored. It was in the old railway office of the Libava-Romen Company that the poet Janka Lučyna (1851-1897) was employed for a time in the 1880s. Under the Bolsheviks, it was reconstructed as a Hall of Residence for University staff, and the street was renamed vul. *Universitetskaja* in the 1930s, before being renamed after the Russian



revolutionary, S. Kirov. It is now used as private residential flats.

Crossing Michaloúski zavulak going westwards, one observes on the right a tall Flemish-style 19th century building, with characteristic gabbling on the oblique corner and portico sections of the uppermost level windows, standing in the last stretch of vul. Kirava before the neo-Babylonian towers of the station precinct. Built of red brick as a dwelling house (no. 5), at the end of the 19th century, it was leased out for use as a private educational establishment, the **Reiman Girls High School**. Studies were directed principally towards the classics, foreign languages and religious instruction. History, geography and natural sciences were also taught. In the senior classes the pupils were trained in the accomplishments: painting, embroidery, gymnastics, handicrafts and dancing. Until its dissolution by the Bolsheviks, the school provided a staff of 30 teachers for the instruction of 500 pupils.

The main entrance is in the form of a lofty portal in the baroque grand manner, with a central rounded arch and an ornamental keystone. Two lateral Corinthian columns, attached to a rusticated projecting portico, support an entablature and triangular dentilled pediment, broken by a niche set in a surround with a diminutive semi-circular crowning pediment. The gable end on the upper level above the portico repeats the pattern of the broken pediment over the entrance. The ground level and top floor windows are square, with ornamental keystones; the second level fenestration is segmentally arched, and the third tier had round arches. The surface is further decorated by flat pilasters of brickwork, and a dentilled cornice between the third and top level. The overall effect of the brick and strong relief of the horizontally barred friezes contrasts well with the classical sobriety of the adjacent buildings. The building is now used as municipal offices.

Reverting to the vul. Sviardlova, turn left and continue northwards to the intersection with the historic vul. **Padhornaja\*** (*Karl-Marxa*). To the left on the north side of the intersection with vul. Lošyca (*Valadarskaja*) is a red-brick building (no. 5) constructed at the end of the 19th century, which from 1917 served as the Bolshevik *Peoples Militia Headquarters*. Raised on three levels, the main entrance is located in the diagonally truncated corner beneath a triple arched oriel, surmounted by a balustraded balcony. On the eastern façade there is a central portico section and two side wings flanked on the second and third level by flat brickwork pilasters broken by an intermediate cornice. In the central portico section a segmentally arched gate leads through a passage-way to a rear courtyard; above it on the second and third levels are two windows, though in the wing sections there is only one window



at each level between the pilasters. The ground floor windows are plain, rectangular; the first floor fenestration, separated from that below by an elaborate intermediate cornice, is round-arched with two symmetrically disposed wrought-iron balconies. Above a second intermediate cornice the fenestration is segmentally arched, with matching lintels. At roof level there is a broad fasciated and dentilled crowning cornice. Its role in the Bolshevik revolutionary movement is commemorated by a plaque.

Proceeding eastwards, a substantial neo-classical building (no. 12) on two floors and a basement, has an extended frontage on the south side of vul. Padhornaja. It was constructed at the beginning of the 20th century as the headquarters of the State Bank of Russia, established in Minsk in 1881. Under Bolshevik rule it became successively the Central Offices of the Party organisation and the Bolshevik youth movement, the Ministry of Finance, and the editorial offices of the magazine *Belaruskaja Rabotnica i Sialanka* ("Belarusan working woman in Town and Country"). Since 1967 it has housed the **Belarusan National Museum\***, originally created in 1957, though the concept of such an institution dates back to the Ja. Tyškievič *Vilnia Museum of Antiquities* (1856) and the foundation by I. Luckievič, also in Vilnia, of the *Belarusan Museum* (1921).

The design of the main façade of the museum has been remodelled with the addition of a third floor and a tier of plain rectangular windows. The ground floor is rusticated and has two decorative cornices; the fenestration of the second floor is round arched. The interior contains a total floorspace of 1687m<sup>2</sup>, with some 18 exhibition rooms housing over 227,000 exhibits. There were, under Bolshevik rule, seven departments to the Museum: Natural History, pre-Soviet social history, and the other five devoted to aspects of "Socialist construction". There is a heavy imbalance in favour of the modern period, it being part of the Bolshevik tenet that Belarusan national life only effectively became possible after the Russian October revolution. However there is sufficient material from before 1918 relating to the history and development of the city to justify a visit. There is a good collection of archeological artefacts\* coins, medals, weaponry, ceramics and glassware for which the city became famous, as well as gold and silver ecclesiastical and secular ornaments\*\*, jewelry, amber beads, woodcarvings, marble sculpture and the silk, brocade sashes (*pajasy*)\*\* of the Belarusan aristocracy from the Radzivil *atelier* in Slucak. There are a number of rare printed books from the 16th-18th centuries, and manuscripts of prose, poetry and music by writers, composers and ethnographers of the 19th-20th centuries. The collection was gathered and its display organised in



Bolshevik times, and is by no means fully representative of the many facets of Belarusan life; a review of the material now being exhibited is in progress.

Adjacent to the National museum is the headquarters of the *Belarusan Energy Commission* (no. 14), at the corner of vul. Felicijanskaja. Its configuration follows the common pattern of a circular tower playing hinge to an L-shaped building on corner-sites. With a basement level and four upper floors, there are intermediate cornices between each level, and the lower two floors are rusticated. The ground floor fenestration is plain rectangular, the second level round arched, the third and fourth rectangular, with triangular pediment lintels on the third level. The corner tower has in addition six corinthian columns extending from third level intermediate to crowning cornice. The façade on vul. Padhornaja also has a centrally disposed colonnade over the main entrance between the third and fourth floor and triangular pediment at crowning cornice level. It is a standard piece of pastiche neo-classical architecture, undistinguished in itself, yet lending a certain distinction to the street as a whole.

Across the Street from the National Museum lies a stucco 19th-century *Dwelling house* (no. 17), formerly the headquarters of the *Minsk Society of Amateurs of the Fine Arts*, which flourished from 1898-1906, and which did much during its brief existence to promote the arts - painting, graphics, sculpture, the theatre, literature and music. Because of the radical tendencies of many of its 650 members, the Society was dissolved by the Tsarist authorities after the 1905 revolution. The association was subsequently reconstituted, and in 1911 staged one of the first exhibitions of works by Belarusan artists, in particular Henrich Vejsenhof (1859-1922), the son of a patriot deported to Siberia for his part in the 1863 Uprising. The building was substantially remodelled after the second World War, a new storey being then added and its present appearance bears little resemblance to the original.

Further along the vul. Padhornaja (*Karl-Marxa*), on the north side moving westward, is the façade of the **Maryinski High School** for Girls, a two-floored stucco building (no. 29) dating from 1879, to which a third storey was added in the 1930s. In the centre of a symmetrical frontage is an entrance and a narrow, slightly projecting portico section, surmounted at roof level by a rectangular pediment with a small, centrally placed segmented arch. The façade is decorated with a roof level and two intermediate cornices, one dentilled, marking the original roof level, and four rusticated pilasters extending from the ground level plinth to the second level cornice. The fenestration of the two lower floors are



segmentally arched, the top tier being of round-arched windows with decorative keystones.

Opened in 1899, the High School was under the discipline of the Dowager Empress Maria of Russia, prescribing shorter class-room lessons than in ordinary government establishments. Studies were orientated towards a humanities and philological curriculum. There were seven classes, and a terminal eighth grade. As the fees were high, the students tended to come from wealthier Russian-speaking families. Subjects included Russian language and literature (at the time the teaching of Belarusan was not permitted), foreign languages, orthography, mathematics, physics and religious instruction. Training in the accomplishments - singing, dancing, painting, handicrafts and gymnastics - was also provided. The gymnasium was hung with icons and pictures of the Russian Imperial family, and exercises were performed in long skirts and tight fitting white collars. Dancing lessons were given here by Kanstancin Aleksiutovič (1884-1943), a graduate of the St. Petersburg School of Dramatic Art (1906), and the future *Maitre de ballet* of the Belarusan State Theatre. He created the choreography for a number of ballets and sketches based on Belarusan folk motifs, as well as staging a number of classical ballets, including Delibes *Coppelia*. During the First World War the school was evacuated into Russia, where it was shut down under the Bolsheviks. The buildings in Minsk became the premises of a Polytechnic school, and from 1925-1932 a political University, before serving as a National Art Gallery. Since the 1960's it has housed the Minsk inter-city Telephone exchange.

Near at hand, on the same side of the street, the **International Academy of Management**, formerly the Minsk Communist *Party High School* (no. 31), was constructed in 1937 by the architect A. Voinau to an L-shaped design, in an inconspicuous neo-classical administrative style. Its pilastered façade is slightly recessed between two lateral wings, also with plain pilasters and regular fenestration from pedestal to plain flat roof, frieze and cornice. The interior is by contrast richly decorated with panelling and columns, including a well-appointed auditorium, conference rooms and offices. The best-known of the former political school's *alumni* was the well-known Soviet ambassador, Minister of Foreign Affairs and UNO delegate *Andrej Hramyka [Gromyko]* (1909-1990) (*alias* "Mr. Nyet") whose grim, poker-faced diplomacy was a permanent feature of the so-called "Cold War". Only once did he appear in a public interview to lose his professional composure, whilst gamely struggling to suppress his glee at President Carter's discomfiture over the Iranian hostage fiasco. During the German occupation of Minsk in



1941-1944 the building served as the Nazi *Kommandantura* for the Belarusan capital.

An asymmetrical **Residential building** (no. 40) on four floors at the southern side of the intersection of vul. Padhornaj (*Marxa*) and vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*) was completed at the end of the 19th century to a design by the architect H. Haj. An off-centre triangular pediment with a central oval lucarne window surmounts three tiers of double pairs of windows with balconies. Between the top double pair is an inconsequential niche containing a plaster urn. The off-centre entrance is located in a rusticated ground level with a plain rectangular stucco surround and lintel. The remaining fenestration of larger, paired, single or smaller windows is disposed in artistic disorder. A three-storied annexe block fronts onto vul. Franciškanskaja; the overall ground-plan is L-shaped with an inner court-yard wing. A wall-plaque records that the sinister Bolshevik chief of police, "Iron Felix" Dzierżyński (1877-1926), resided here for a few days in August and September 1920. Born at Dzierżyna in North-western Belarús into a polonised family of minor gentry and recruited as a student into the Bolshevik movement, he was appointed by the Russian revolutionary V. Ulianov (*Lenin*) to lead the struggle against "counter-revolution and sabotage". His stay in Minsk was to set up the machinery of *Chekist* (Secret police) repression in 1920-1921 which led numerous unsuspecting victims to the killing-fields on Trinity Golden Hill. Other tenants in the block included A. Čarviakou (1892-1937), the historian and ethnographer M. Nikolski (1877-1959). The best known resident was the gifted *Narodny Paet* ("Poet laureate") Piotr Broúka (1905-1980), who left a number of sensitive earlier lyrics among a substantial corpus of official didactic and politically orientated verse, much of it poor stuff, written in the era of "our sun", "the dearest, simplest and wisest of men", "beloved Stalin". In him, to echo Professor McMillin: "Belarusan literature had indeed reached a low ebb". His flat has nevertheless been preserved as the **Broúka Museum**, to perpetuate the memory of his residence here from 1951-1980. The collection, opened in 1984, houses some 6,000 exhibits in five rooms, including photographs, manuscripts, paintings, first editions and other mementoes relating to the poet.

Further along the street on the right hand side, in a similar block of *Zakazniki* ("grace and favour") **Residential apartments** \* (no. 36) dating from the 1950's, lived the well-known poet Piatro Hlebka (1905-1969), a member of the nationally orientated *Uzvyšša* group (fl. 1926) and the children's writer Janka Maúr (1883-1971), author of the "The Robinson Crusoes of Palessie" (1930). Most popular of all was



Úladzimier Karatkievič (1930-1984 ), the convivial historical novelist writer, “whose consistently readable works have shown not merely a love, but also a deep knowledge of the Belaruś’ cultural and historical heritage” ( A. McMillin). Author of the novel “Ears of Wheat under your sickle” (1965), and a well-known figure at animated literary meetings, particularly in hotel bars, he became a cult-figure in his lifetime, and his grave a rallying point for young radicals in the struggle against the ossified establishment.

The present **Parliament House\*** of the Republic of Belaruś is located on the south side of vul. Padhornaja (*Karl-Marxa* ) facing the Gardens of Central Square. Previously located in *Dom Urady* (Government



***Supreme Soviet (Parliament) of the Republic of Belarus.***

House) in Independence square, Parliament removed to the well-appointed Central Office and Congress Hall of the Bolshevik party after its failed coup in August 1991. Central square has traditionally been the heart of democratic government administration since 1917, being near the site of the All-Belarusan Congress of 1917 (*Kupala Theatre* ), the seat of Government of the First and Second Belarusan National Republic in 1918 and 1919 (*Jubilejny Dom* ), and the Second All-Belarusan



Congress of 1944 (*The National Library*). Built in brick and stucco in 1939-1941 and completed in 1947 to a design by A. Voinaú and U. Varaksin, it takes the form of a monolithic square block in the modernistic neoclassical style of the Chicago school (e.g. *Unity Temple*). The massive, rectilinear façade on six floors has for sole decoration its fenestration, set in twenty three vertical red stucco, recessed panels between twenty-five strut-like pillars. These are surmounted by a dentilled crowning cornice and a diminutive centrally placed two-tiered pediment with a finial. The main entrance consists of a plain rectangular portal of red granite. The interior is furnished with a vestibule, cloakrooms, a library, a printing press, a restaurant and a Parliament chamber of 350 seats. The existing statuary and bas-reliefs are the work of A. Bembel.

Further east at the intersection of vul. Padhornaja and vul. Skabaleúskaja (*Cyrvona- armejskaja*) is the former *Central Office* of the Bolshevik Youth League (*Komsomol*), a plain administrative block on four and five floors, the entrance of which is situated in the oblique corner facet. It was constructed in 1947 to one of Zaborski's less successful designs with a portico set in a recessed panel, where ill-assorted windows are disposed on either side of two clumsy attached pillars on a rusticated plinth. The ground level outer wall is similarly rusticated; there are two intermediate cornices between the three lower floors, with a rank of round-arched windows on the second level. The fenestration on the other levels is plain rectangular. The upper level is decorated with a "folk-motif" frieze and surmounted by a dentilled crowning cornice.

Reverting to the south western side of Central Square, the **Janka Kupala Theatre\*\***, formerly the Minsk Municipal Theatre, is another monument on Central Park, historic not only by reason of the role it played in the life of the Belarusan theatre, but also because of its close association with the struggle for national Independence. The exterior appearance of the building has been substantially modified from the original Theatre, erected during the Governorship of the Russian Prince Trubetzkoi in 1890 to an *Ecole des Beaux Arts* design with ridged pilasters, cornices, balconies, parapets, and a three windowed façade by K. Kazlouúski and K. Uviadzienski. The front was re-constructed after the 1941-1945 War (*Architect*: A. Duchan) with a simplified central façade surmounted by a neo-Greek pediment over three entrance doors and triple elongated windows, and two wings with regular rectangular fenestration on three floors. It was not an improvement on the original. The stage measures 10.6 m. by 14.9 m, with a height of 17 metres; the auditorium, richly decorated with mouldings and paintings, originally



had 550 seats, but facilities were later increased to 700.

Its life began with a performance of "The Sphinx" by Octave Feuillet (1821-1890), a fashionable French dramatist of the *Troisième Empire* who, whilst resisting the prevailing trend towards naturalism, was esteemed as a fine analyst of the social psychology of his day. Among other early productions were "Hamlet" and "King Lear" by Shakespeare, Gogol's "The Government Inspector", as well as a production by the Theatre de Paris of F. Costelan's "Opera italienne", directed by A. Maeterlinck. Other visiting Theatre companies staged Jewish and Polish productions, though it was not until 1906 that the formerly proscribed Belarusian language was heard from the stage of the Minsk Theatre, when Aleś Burbis (1885-1922), one of the earliest protagonists of Belarusian Drama, at the end of a routine performance recited three poems by Janka Kupala, and was warmly applauded. In 1907 the Minsk-born Polish artist F. Żdanowicz recited Belarusian verses at a Charity performance, and later organised in the grounds of the nearby Polish *Sokol* Sports Club, a *Belaruski Kirmaś* (Belarusian Fair), devoted exclusively to Belarusian songs and poetry.

The first significantly Belarusian dramatic performance to take place in the Minsk Municipal Theatre, related by the Secretary of the Belarusian Military Council, Vasil Zacharka (1877-1943), was at the *First All-Belarusian Congress* in December 1917, opened by the respected scholar Jazep Dyla in the presence of an eminent gathering of scholars (Ja. Karski), officers and workers. The Congress opened with a brass band playing the patriotic song: *A chto tam idze* to the words of the poet Janka Kupala. A delegate, who proposed somewhat insensitively during the speeches of welcome that the national White-red-white flag be removed and replaced by the Red flag, was met with shouts of "Out! Away with him!", and the respected figure of General Kanstancyn Alaxiejeŭski, (1855-c.1920s) - with General Kandratovič one of the high-ranking Belarusian military delegates present - strode up to repair the insult, pointedly kissing the national colours to enthusiastic shouts from a peasant delegate: "Long live free Belaruś! Long live the Belarusian national flag!" His cry was immediately taken up by the entire assembly, and the tactless revolutionary had to make good his escape. Although Bolshevik representatives such as Razaŭski participated in the discussions, and an official Communist delegation from St. Petersburg was expected, Krivoshein the Bolshevik Commandant of Minsk and a boisterous squad of soldiers with armoured cars and machine-guns arrived, and without further ado strode up to the platform, declared the Congress closed and the Praesidium to be under arrest. For his pains, the visibly befuddled



Soviet Commandant had his face slapped by a woman delegate - Jurieva, and lost his fancy Caucasian fur-hat in the ensuing scuffle. This incident degenerated into an all-night *fracas*, as the soldiers tried to evict one-by-one the elected delegates of the peasants, soldiers and workers from the auditorium. In a tragi-comedy verging on the burlesque, each time the Bolsheviks tried to arrest the Presidium, the Congress would on a show of hands propose and elect a new one, before the previous members had been taken into custody. Three successive *Praesidia* were elected in this way, and had to be removed bodily by the Reds. Those arrested by the Communists were subsequently released, but the population of Minsk was greatly angered by this brutal flouting of the democratic process.

Not to be out-done, the Bolsheviks on re-occupying Minsk in December of 1918, staged their own first "All-Belarusan Congress of workers, peasants and soldiers" at the Theatre from the 2-3rd February 1919, an event now commemorated by an inscribed plaque. With only 230 delegates present, the auditorium was not even half-full to hear the proclamation of the Constitution of the "Belarusan Soviet Socialist Republic". The event was nevertheless of importance in that it recognised a status which the Rada had resoundingly claimed for Belaruś before the world on 25th March 1918 - that of a sovereign and independent state, with Minsk as its capital and its frontiers comprising its original provinces. However the Rada was soon to return from exile to continue patiently, if needs must with a temporarily limited sovereignty in collaboration with the Poles, the work of national reconstruction. Only in 1921 was the Rada finally forced into exile, first in Kaunas (Lithuania), then in Prague and later in Paris, Munich and the United States where it still remains active, its various appeals and proclamations being published in the national overseas press - *Backauščyna* (Munich 1947- 1966), *Belarus* (N.Y. since 1950)

On 19th September 1919 before a full house, the well-known choir of Ūl. Teraŭski (1871-1938) founded in 1914, gave a much-applauded concert of Belarusan folksongs and romances in the presence of the visiting Polish military Commander Jozef Pilsudski. On that occasion an address of welcome was read by the poet Aleś Harun in the Belarusan language, to which Pilsudski replied, also speaking in Belarusan. In 1920 the Municipal Theatre became the Belarusan State Theatre and staged the first performance there of Kupala's *Paulinka*. Teraŭski, who composed the music of the national anthem of Belaruś to the words of Makar Kraŭcoŭ (c.1890-1939): *My vyjdziam ščylnymi radami*, was the choral director of the Belarusan State Theatre from 1920-1935, and the



author of two of the first songbooks for trio and 4-part choirs: *Bielaruski Spieúnik* (1921), and *Bielaruski Lirnik* (1922). His contemporary Mikola Ravienski (1886-1953) was also appointed choirmaster to the Theatre in 1923, and produced in the same year in Minsk his song-book *Zbornik Piesien z notami*.

Other Belarusian plays were staged: Kupala's *Razkidanae hniazdo* (1921), M. Čarot's *Nà Kupalle* and *Kastuś Kalinoŭski* (1923), *Most* by Ja. Ramanovič, *Backaúščyna* by K. Čorny (1932), *Partyzany* by K. Krapiva (1938), and the operas *Kaciaryna* (1939) and *Lasnoe Voziera* (1943) by M. Kulikovič-Ščahloŭ. Shakespeare once again held the stage in Minsk with a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1946. Since then numerous premieres have been staged, including works by Krapiva, Makajenak, Mieležka, Dudaroŭ and many others. Great actors and actresses such as S. Staniuta (b.1905) also made their debuts at this historic Theatre.

Following the vul. Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) northwards with Central Square Park on the right revert to towards **Skaryna Avenue**, where on the left at the intersection with the Avenue stood the celebrated *Hotel de Paris*, also known as the *Dom Braude*, with the *Hotel Eúropa* and the *Garni* one of the leading hotels in Minsk, with a music-hall attached. Here, on 25th and 27th June 1911, the travelling Belarusian Theatre Company of the 'father' of the Belarusian Theatre, Ihnat Bujnicki (1861-1917), gave its first performance in Minsk with a representation of K. Kahaniec's satirical play *A Gentleman of Fashion*; they also performed with success in Warsaw and St-Petersburg. The little Kupala Theatre, formerly a cinema, now occupies the site. Further along the Avenue, the mid-19th century Lutheran Church on the Avenue was also demolished during postwar redevelopment; a well known cafe, the *Chvilinka*, and the restaurant *Nioman* on the south side of the Avenue, have replaced the facilities of the *Hotel de Paris*. On the opposite side, between vul. Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) and vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*), stood the *Stella* 'Belarusian restaurant', reopened in 1919 in what had formerly been an officers club. A two-course lunch or dinner cost 8 roubles, and *śniedanne* (breakfast) could be had for 5 roubles, at a price slightly less than at the fashionable *Eúropa* Hotel on Cathedral square.

Turning right from the Avenue up the **Zachareŭski zavulak** (vul. *Urickskaja*), there are two noteworthy residential houses on the left in the *art nouveau* style, which provide an agreeable contrast with the grandiose blocks on the city's principal thoroughfare. The first is a two-storey stuccoed apartment house (no. 6) constructed in 1914. It consists of a



central façade on a base with a roof-level cornice, and an intermediate cornice dividing the horizontally rusticated frontage of the ground floor from the plain-surfaced top floor. There are two narrow, slightly projecting wings, the southernmost of which comprises the entrance door and a vertical staircase-window and sill, with above it a moulded panel between two pilasters bearing the date of construction. The corresponding northern projection has an upper and lower window matching the horizontal fenestration of the central frontage, the lower six apertures plain and the top-floor each with a rectangular moulded frame. The central top window has a small projecting rectangular wrought-iron balcony. The second building is also of stucco on two floors, built in the first decade of the century to an irregular design, the street façade having as its main feature a two-storied bow front surmounted by a rounded triangular gable and pitched roof. Other features include a balcony on a squared entrance portico on the south side, a semi-circular corner bow set with three windows on each level, an intervening vertical blind arch on the street front and three further windows on each floor to the north of the central bow.

At the intersection with vul. Zborava there is a view to the left towards one of the most impressive older buildings in the west end of the City centre, the so-called **Piščalaúski Fortress\*\*** in vul. Lošyca (*Valadarskaja*), which plays to Minsk the role of the former Bastille in Paris, or the Tower of London. It was erected under Russian rule in 1825 during the reign of Tsar Alexander I to serve as a place of confinement for political and other special offenders. Their number has been such that the Fortress has become a national historic monument in its own right. The Governor of Minsk at the time of its building was Vincenty Hiecevič (1817-1831), an official of Belarusan descent, and Piščeli's design is clearly modelled along the traditional lines of late mediaeval fortified castles and manors in Belaruś such as Hajciuniški and Holšany. A plain square, uncrenellated curtain wall encloses a number of buildings including an infirmary, a pharmacy, a school and formerly a church. The principal building is a rectangular keep of stuccoed brickwork, with a shallow sloping hipped roof and four attached circular corner-towers, crenellated and roofed with shallow conical spires. The uppermost of the three floors has plain symmetrical horizontal fenestration, though the two lower floors have windows in groups of three. The four corner towers are lit by irregularly placed arched and porthole windows. The keep has a roof-level cornice and an intermediate cornice between the second and third floors. There are central attached turrets at ground level.



The Fortress was soon put to good use both after the 1831 Uprising, and during the repression of the still more widespread national revolt led by Kastus Kalinoŭski in 1863. The Belarusan poet Vincenty Dunin Marcyńkievič (1807-1884) was incarcerated here from 1864-1865 for his participation in the Uprising. Another patriotic man of letters, Karuś Kahanieć [Kazimier Kastravicki](1868-1918) was twice imprisoned here from 1905-1906, and 1910-1911, shortly after the premiere of his play *Modny Šlachciuk* ("A Gentleman of Fashion") by the Bujnicki ensemble, for inciting the peasantry of his native Kojdanaŭ region to revolt against Tsarist rule. The Kastravicki country mansion and estates were situate at *Vialikija Novasiolki*, outside Minsk. The leading poet and writer Jakub Kolas (1882-1956) himself served a three-year sentence in the Fortress from 1908-1911, for taking part in illegal meetings of school-teachers. During his confinement he wrote a number of poems, and began work on his great folk epic *Novaja Ziamla* - "The New Land". Other political prisoners and dissidents were held here after the 1905 rebellion, among them reputedly the talented young romantic poet Aleś Prušynski Harun (1887-1920). The Bolsheviks from 1918 onwards incarcerated their "class enemies" here, not a few of whom were then tragically murdered in the killing fields of Trinity Golden Hill and later at Kurapaty, including Alexander Ŭlasaŭ (1874-1941). One of the editors of the first literary journal *Naša Niva*, he was imprisoned and then shot in Minsk in 1941. A more recent victim of Boshevik justice was the journalist Valery Siadoŭ, jailed for his one-man demonstration on the steps of the Statue of Lenin, in what was to become *Independence Square*. His now famous "Fruits of Socialism" display of prison uniform, boots, gallows, and other instruments of repression led to his indictment by the Soviet authorities for "desacrating a public monument"; he was remanded in custody to uncomfortable quarters in the Fortress, and held there for months without trial. His imprisonment became a *cause celebre* in the late 1980s; he was supported and visited by leaders of the political opposition Zianon Pazniak and Novikaŭ, who campaigned for, and ultimately obtained his release.

The elegantly classical façade of the *National Drama Theatre* in vul. Lošyca (*Valadarskaja*) (no. 5) is one of the most successful examples of restrained municipal building in Minsk. A finely proportioned white stucco rectangular building on two floors, flanked by two plain corner pilasters with a simple crowning cornice and frieze, frames a hexastyle portico of corinthian columns supporting a triangular pediment, surmounted by a smaller engaged pediment of similar shape. A flight of steps leads up to the three entrance doors linked by a classical



entablature and a central triangular pediment. Over the central entrance is a triple round-arched window flanked by two single round-arched windows containing stained glass by V. Pazniak. Behind this elegant Louis XVI-style facade lies the corpus of the old **Choral Synagogue\***. Like the Jewish community in Minsk, it has had a tragic history which for seventy years has lain concealed behind a facade of official conformity, but it is still there.

The Minsk congregation was already well established in 1489 when the collecting of the municipal customs dues was leased by the authorities to certain Jews of their number. The settlement prospered in the 16th century playing an increasingly important part in commercial and civic life. In 1507 the Grand Duke Žyhimund II (*Pol.* I) confirmed to the Jews in his domains the privileges conferred on them by Grand Duke Kazimier, and appointed a *Starosta* (Lord Lieutenant) or plenipotentiary empowered to act as an intermediary between the throne and the Hebrew community. The official Tax-collector by Royal appointment, according to Syrakomla, was the Jewish financier Michel Iosifavič of Bierascie. From Stefan Batory the Jews of Minsk received their own Charter in 1579, and although their rights to engage in trade and commerce were restricted for a time in 1606, their privileges were confirmed successively in 1633, 1679 and 1722, when their synagogues were exempted from all jurisdictions save that of the Grand Duke himself. Previously a dependency of the Hebrew *kahal* of Bierascie province, the Minsk region established itself as an independent province in 1631. The Jewish community fought loyally for the Grand Duchy against the Russians and Cossacks during the wars of 1648 and 1653, suffering from the same bloody massacres and deportations as the rest of the population. With the return of more prosperous times the intellectual life of the city was enriched through the founding in 1685 of a *Yeshiva* (school of Rabbinical studies) by the local Rabbi Moses Mordecai. The school was to produce a number of eminent scholars in the following century: *rabbanim* Jechiel ben-Salaman Heilprin, Ariyeh-Leib ben-Asher Huncberh and Rafael Kahen.

By 1766 there were 1322 Jews liable for poll tax, but the total community already numbered several thousands. In the 18th century they were prominent as traders on market days and at fairs, often distributing free samples or left-over *matzot* after Passover to their regular Christian customers for the making of dumplings ( *Yid*: "knedlach", *Bel*: "kidanki"). Rabbis and *dayanim* rendered important community services to country-dwellers as physicians and scribes, and Jewish fiddlers, cymbalists and other musicians were in great demand at local



festivals. A first Jewish printing house was established in Minsk in 1808 by Simbah Zinmiel, which by 1823 had published more than 23 liturgical books in Hebrew. Another publishing house founded by Blaustein became active about this time, and the Belarusian works of the poet and playwright V. Dunin-Marcinkievič were published in Minsk by the Jewish printer Jokiel Dvorec in the 1850s.

In 1847 the Jewish population of Minsk was 12,976 and by 1897 the number had risen to 47,562 - more than 52% of the total population. Much of the city's prosperity was based on Jewish commercial enterprise in manufacturing and the retail trade: industrial engineering (Jakobson, Livšyc & Co., I. Zalkind & Vilbuševič), boiler-making (L. Livšyc and Vyhodski), starch-makers (Trepel), malting and brewing (Š. Nusbein), cigarette-manufacturers (S. Hincburh, B. Charlip, R. Cukerman-Davidson), paper-mills (K. Kantarovič, I. Šifmanovič), timber-merchants (Levin), textiles and clothing (Fiškin, Boršč & Livščić), musical instruments (Keller; Maškilejson; Kač), and electrical engineering (F. Levin). Many of the finest hotels and restaurants in Minsk were owned or managed by Jews: "Europa" (A. Saulevič), "Soutine", "Paris" (A. Pildan), "Nova-Berlin" (M. Hordon), "Vienna" (A. Perelman). Naturally they remained active in their traditional professions as artists, doctors, lawyers, chemists, watchmakers, jewellers, booksellers, barbers, tailors and printers. The firm of Ja. Hrynblat is remembered for its publishing of material in the Belarusian language, in particular a curious little brochure by Zm. Biadula, entitled "The Jews in Belaruś" (1918); in it are interesting examples of songs and folktales in an amalgamate dialect of Yiddish and Belarusian. Hrynblat also printed the first seven numbers of the national democratic Journal *Zvon* (1919) and numerous other nationalist publications. Among the emigrants from Minsk to the New World, must be numbered the cinematographer Louis Levi Mayer (1885-1957) of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer fame, the renowned United States legal philosopher and historian Morris Kahan (1880-1947) and the pioneer of American radio broadcasting David Sarnaú (Sarnov) (1891-1971).

At the end of the 19th century Minsk became a centre of the Jewish national revival, with many activists engaged in political initiatives directed against increasing Russian chauvinism. An All-Russian Zionist Congress took place in Minsk from 4th-10th September 1902 which finally recognised both the progressive and the traditionalist viewpoints in the important field of Jewish education. Many Jews sought a better life by emigrating to Western Europe and the United States; others gave their support to the socialising Bund, whilst S. Plaúnik (the leading poet Zmitok Biadula), Žydloúski, and many more became active mem-



bers of the Belarusian national movement. They played an significant role in the cultural life of the emerging Belarusian Republic, with the creation of Jewish sections in the Institute of Belarusian Culture (*Inbelkult*) and at the State University. Jewish architects, musicians and particularly artists from the prestigious *Viciebsk Art School* such as Jury Pen, Marc Chagall, S. Judovin, and Zair Azhur have left a lasting mark on Belarusian culture. Religious life became increasingly difficult under Bolshevik rule; nevertheless spiritual leaders like the popular preacher Rabbi Benjamin Żubicki (1865-1937), known as the *Magid* of Minsk, and Rabbi Yehoshua Cymbalist of the water-carrier's synagogue, helped sustain religious life and organise spiritual resistance against the Communists and their all too numerous renegade Jewish collaborators. Many thousands of Jews subsequently perished in the Stalinist massacres of the 1930's and in the Nazi holocaust of 1941-1944. Nevertheless the present-day Jewish population of Minsk is still estimated at some 40.000, though this now constitutes less than 3 % of the total inhabitants of the capital. Few of these are able or indeed wish to adhere to the Mosaic dietary laws in the absence of *kosher* goods in the shops. Since Independence there has been some revival of interest in Jewish religious life, and a growing development of trade between Belarus and the State of Israel.

The present Theatre front designed by M. Baklanaú has retained the principal elements of the old façade - the triple round-arched window over the central entrance and the two lateral arched windows. The nave is now the auditorium of the Theatre, whilst the side aisles form two foyers where during performances refreshments can be obtained. Although as has been noted the city had a Jewish community from the 15th century, few traces of their other places of worship remain. The choral synagogue was the largest of these, and was purpose-built at the end of the 19th-century in a flamboyant Mauresque style with horseshoe arches and contrasting horizontal layers of stucco and red-brick. The synagogue was closed after the Bolshevik revolution in 1923 and converted into a workers club. In 1926 it became a cinema renamed "Kultura". Here in 1929 was held the *9th All-Belarusian Soviet Congress* which adopted the first Five-year plan, resulting in the mass-collectivisation of farms in Belarus. This heralded a Bolshevik assault on Belarusian national culture, and the mass executions of intellectuals and small-holders (*kulaks*) during the Stalinist reign of Terror in the 1930s.

The old synagogue survived the Nazi-Soviet War, but in a wave of anti-Jewish repression, triggered off by the murder in Minsk of the emi-



gent Jewish actor and friend of Marc Chagall, Šloma Michoels in 1948, the secularised Choral synagogue was eradicated. The Moorish facade was reconstructed in its present neo-classical form, and the building was given over for use as a Russian language theatre. Official requests have recently been made by the Minsk Jewish community to the municipality for the return of their traditional place of worship.

Vul. Lošyca (*Valadarskaja*) contains a number of attractive and interesting dwelling-houses and apartments. The principal façade of a long-fronted apartment house on the West side of the street is an impressive three level building with a pitched roof, comprising a narrow central portico and two wing sections (no. 7). A fasciated crowning cornice and two intermediate cornices between the second and third levels are broken by projecting pilasters; the ground level walls are rusticated. The fenestration on the ground floor of the wings consist of a group of two moulded frames; above is a large window with a central segmented arch and the third level has twin windows in a moulded frame. The portico section second and third level fenestration matches that of the wings, with at ground floor level a large arched portal. The majority of the frames have keystone ornamentation. On each of the second and third levels there are three wrought iron balconies. There is a verdant inner courtyard. Adjoining the ensemble is a second handsome, but less elaborate period *Appartment block* (no. 9) on three levels with rusticated pilasters, ornamental festoons and garlands, and small balconies.

Almost opposite is a substantial neo-baroque late-19th century apartment house on three floors, in the style of an italianate *palazzo*, with a chamfered corner on the south-eastern side. A narrow lane separates its southern façade from the rear of the *Minsk Hotel*. The ground floor has been adapted to commercial user as shops. The upper two levels above an intermediate cornice, consist of a lower rank of arched windows each with a moulded surround, sill, lower panel and ornamental lintel and an upper tier of segmentally arched windows and decorative stucco lintels. Eight elegant pilasters with ornamental capitals and two centrally-placed bow-fronted balconies with wrought iron balustrades embellish the eastern and southern frontage. In one of the apartments (no. 12a) was the Club of the right-wing *Representatives of the City of Minsk*, formed on 25th February 1918 and headed by Count Raman Skirmunt, which included a number of influential patriots - Fr. V. Hädleúski, Archpriest Kulčicki, General Kandratovič, A. Úlasaú, Alaksiuk, Ziamkievič, and others, representing the more conservative and staid wing of the national independence movement. A short walk leads the visitor to the northern side of the intersection of vul. Lošyca



(*Valadarskaja*) with Skaryna Avenue.

It is reported that the national archives show that the Proclamation of Belarusan Independence of 25th March 1918 was made from the *Dom Malina* premises of the *Farmers' Land Bank* at the corner of vul. Lošyca (*Valadarskaja*) and the Skaryna Avenue (vul. *Zachareŭskaja* 45). According to V. Zacharka the Russian and Jewish deputies opposed the Declaration made by the Belarusan delegates without their assent, and refused to participate. The initiative similarly angered the Germans, in that the Belarusans had thereby openly refused to recognise the validity of the Treaty of Bierascie. Nevertheless, in the order of events leading up to the historic declaration, in particular the decisions of the All-Belarusan Congress of 5-17th December 1917, the call for Independence of 1st January 1918 at the Belarusan-American Club (*Belaruskaja Chatka*), and the adoption of the First and Second Constituent Charters of the 21st February and 9th March, it had become a necessary and inevitable formality which could no longer be deferred. The Second Charter had already provided: "*Belaruś... is declared to be a Democratic Republic*". The Third Constituent Charter, drafted by Jazep Varonka (1891-1952) and Anton Luckievič (1884-1946), went on formally to proclaim in the face of hostile minority interests and the occupying powers: "*We, the Council of the Belarusan Democratic Republic, have cast off from our native land the last vestige of national dependence which the Russian Tsars imposed by force upon our free and independent land. From this time forth, the Belarusan Democratic Republic is proclaimed an independent and free state. The peoples of Belarus themselves, under the aegis of their Constituent Assembly, shall determine the future national relations of Belaruś.*"

On the south side of Avenue with its western wing facing onto Independence Square stands the **Central Post Office\***, an impressive building (no. 10) in the Italianate neo-baroque style, constructed in 1949-1953 to a design by A. Duchan and U. Karol. It comprises a principal façade on the Avenue with two lateral wings and a central rotunda to which access is gained through a massive portico. This comprises a central arch extending the height of four floors, and flanked by pairs of corinthian columns supporting two entablatures together with the cornice and massive attic frieze surmounting the whole length of the main façade. The frieze over the central arch and lateral columns of the portico is decorated with stucco ornamentation and a large heraldic moulding of the Belarusan State armorial bearings on a shallow step-gabled pediment. On either side four levels of recessed windows are set in pairs between seven columns and entablature, the attic-level frieze being deco-



rated with roundels set in shallow recessed panels.

The interior is reached through a pillared entrance and a two-level vestibule with eight marbelled columns giving access to the central rotunda, and side corridors with administrative offices. The main postal facilities are located in the rotunda beneath a dome with a span of 30 metres and the interior is decorated with statues, stone and plasterwork rosettes, roundels, garlands and festoons by the Belarusan P. Adaškieviča (b.1918) and a number of other artists. A central candelabra 3 metres in height of bronze, crystal, cut glass, and mouldings hangs from an ornamental rosette. The area is lit by 15 round-arched windows (260cm x 190cm.) with coloured *stained glass* \* by V. Pazniak (1980) depicting the evolution of Belarusan architecture from the 11th to the 18th century.

A postal service was established on a regular basis in Minsk in 1717 when, according to Syrakomla, the *Sojm* (Royal Parliament) set up a postal staged service between Vilnia, Minsk and Mahilouú. In 1721 postal communications were established between Minsk and Navahradak, the two principal session cities of Belaruś. The first Ministry for Post and Telegraph communications was set up in Minsk in 1918 by the Government of the Belarusan National Republic, but the postal service was controlled by the occupying Imperial German Army, and the first set of Belarusan postage stamps designed for the occasion were never put into use. In 1919 Russian overprints were used for a time with a Belarusan overprint, though apart from a few Belarusan themes depicted on the stamps of the former USSR, Belarusan postal activity was limited to provisional services in Horadnia (*Litva* [1919] ), the Dzvinsk area (*Asobny Atrad BNR* [1921]), and in emigration (*BNR* [1952], *Pošta ZBVB* [1971], *BZP* [1978] ). The first official postage stamp of the Republic of Belaruś to appear after Independence in 1991 was in a denomination of 1 Rouble, and depicted the 12th century Cross of St. Euphrosyne. More recent issues include a stamp commemorating the great folklorist and choir-director Ryhor Šyrma (1892-1978), and a set illustrating the historical armorial bearings of the principal Belarusan cities.

The Post Office stands at the commencement of **Skaryna Avenue\*\***, initially laid out as vul. *Zachareúskaja* in the mid 19th century, and rebuilt between 1946 and 1954 as the show-place transversal thoroughfare of Minsk. Ten kilometers in length and 48 metres wide, the street links five of the city's main *plazas*: Independence Square, Central Square, Victory Square, Kolas Square and Kalinin Square. Much of its impressiveness derives from the equal height of the buildings - five to



six floors - and the harmonious classical style of the architecture; it is regarded as a particularly fine example of mid-20th century town planning. The Avenue consists largely of public buildings in the grand manner (the *Central Post Office* \*, the *Congress Hall* \*\*, the *Belarusan Theatrical Institute*, the *Belarusan National Bank*, *Jubilee House* \*\*\*, the *National Circus*, the *Philharmonia*, the *Polytechnical Institute* \*, the *Academy of Sciences* \*\*\*,) department stores and apartment houses, designed to make up a harmonious ensemble, an object the teams of able and highly qualified architects (Duchan, Karol, Badanaú, Baršč, Haj, Parusnikaú, Hehart, Jaršou and others) were singularly successful in achieving.

The western end of the avenue, between Independence and Central Squares, is the main **Shopping centre** of the city. Here are located the *Hum* (GUM) store, "Paúlinka", "Kadr", the Central Book store, the Cafes "Nioman", "Minsk" and "Viesnia", with other popular stores and restaurants in the central and eastern sections of the Avenue. Here also are conveniently situated apartment houses and *zakazniki* ("grace and favour" flats) overlooking leafy inner court-yards. Many well-known figures from the world of art and science resided here: the writer M. Lynkoú (1899-1975) and the botanist V. Kuprevič (1897-1969) at no. 12; the internationally known dulcimer player I. Žynovič (1907-1974) at no. 19; the composer A. Bahatyrou (1913) at no. 22; the actress L. Ržeúskaja (1899-1977), the composer M. Aladaú (1890-1972), and the writer I. Hurski (1899-1972) at no. 30, to mention but a few.

Leaving the Central Post Office and Skaryna Avenue, a left turn brings the visitor into Independence Square.

## Independence Square, the University and Hrušaúka Suburb. (Walkabout No.4)

*Independence Square - Government House\*\* - Church of St.Simeon and Alena\* (Martyraloh, Belarusi BNF) - Art Nouveau apartments [Šyrma] \*- vul. Sviardlova - vul. Nova-Maskoúskaja - City Hall - Metropolitan Building - the Metro underground - University Campus - Pedagogical Institute - vul. St. Peterburha - Zviazda Offices - The Vilnia Station - Libava Romenski line - All-Belarusan Congress [1917] - Railway workers and Bolsheviks - vul. Rabkoraúskaja - Zmitrok Biadula House\* - Minsk Institut Kultury - The wooden architecture of Hrušeúka suburb\*\*.*

**Independence Square** was conceived in about 1930 as a grandiose memorial to the October Revolution. Yet within sixty years, it was



destined to become its funereal monument, marking the forum of the struggle for Belarusian national independence, whose name now replaces that of the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov (*Lenin*) it was intended to perpetrate. In contrast to the fine artistic unity of Victory Square, its appearance reflects a piecemeal, not to say haphazard, development over the seventy years of Soviet rule, when it began to grow out of the clearances of the massive Russian 'railway' *Church of Our Lady of Kazan* and the less affluent fringes of the Jewish quarter round vul. Bazarnaja. Happily nothing of any great value was lost in the process. On the contrary, after the initial reaction to the sheer scale and apparently disjointed appearance of the ensemble, one notices that these disparate buildings form an interesting and impressive anthology or directory of municipal architecture in 20th century Belaruś. From serving as the forum for Soviet military parades and state-organised rallies, the Square was later to become the scene of increasingly massive demonstrations against the Bolshevik establishment. From 1988 until the collapse of the Soviet system and the Proclamation of Independence on 25th August 1991, ever-growing crowds - some camping overnight in tents - gathered in protest against Russian Bolshevik rule to a background of white-red-white flags. There was spontaneous dancing, accordion music and mass-singing of Bahdanovič's patriotic poem "Pahonia" to the strains of the "Marseillaise". Independence was greeted by cheering and speeches from leaders of the Opposition Popular Front groups. To commemorate its historic role in the struggle for national Liberation, the plaza has been renamed *Independence Square*.

Oddly but appropriately, the eye is somehow drawn in the first place to an interesting agglomeration of red-brick towers, spires, and pitched roofs known as the "Red Church" (*Cyrvonny Kosciel*), or more formally as the Catholic **Church of SS. Simeon and Helena\*\***. It was built in 1908-1910 to commemorate the premature death of two young children of the Belarusian aristocratic Vajnilovič family, to whose patron saints the church is dedicated. The architects were T. Pojazdziński and V. Marconi of Warsaw (Poland), the latter of whose kinsman restored the early 16th c. frescoes of the Belarusian monastery of Supraśl. The Red Church, just opposite Government House (*Dom Urada*) became one of the historic centres of the National Revolution of 1988-1991. The building and its various appurtenances were designed in a teutonic style of Art Nouveau (*Art moderne*) in which Gothic spires and gables combine with red brick romanesque arches and windows to form a striking ensemble. Despite its complex appearance, the Church has the simple ground-plan of a Basilica comprising an entrance porch,





*St. Symon and Alena Cathedral in Minsk.*



*The Government Residence.*



a nave, two side aisles and two transepts, with a semi-circular choir and sanctuary. On the eastward side of the transepts are two symmetrically placed towers with Baltic-style gable and valley spires, whilst a third higher tower with two gables and pitched roof is decorated with two rows of narrow rounded blind arches, horizontal friezes of small arches, and two sunken panels of brickwork each relieved by a row of three-arched fenestration. The towers house three bells named after the founder, his own father and his dead son - *Edvard* (1287lbs), *Michal* (2373lbs) and *Symon* (760lbs). The west wall of the nave and the transepts are each decorated with large rose-windows. Forming part of the façade onto Independence Square is a lateral one-storied gallery comprising a slightly projecting central section with a large arched window, and two symmetrical wings each with three arched windows decorated with white stone colonnettes. The red brickwork is relieved by occasional ornamental motifs in yellow brick. Interesting stained glass-work in the rose-windows and hanging lights to Belarusian motifs by H. Vaščanka (b.1928) were added in 1971-1974.

Over the main western Entrance is polygonal tympanum decorated with the city arms of Minsk: *Azure, the Theotokos surrounded by six angels, all proper*. Originally displayed in the recess were the arms of the founders Edvard and Alympia Vajnilovič. The Vajnilovič family were of noble Belarusian descent from the Navahradak region, bearing the arms of the Syrakomla group (*Gules; an Abdank, on the apex thereof a cross all argent*), many of whom achieved eminence in Grand Ducal times as ecclesiastics or in local government. Among other notables of the family, Tamaš Vajnilovič served as Banneret of Vaŭkavysk (1660c.), and one Anton Vajnilovič was Rector of the Jesuit college in Minsk during the early 18th-century. Edvard Vajnilovič (1874-1928) was himself a radical, patriotically inclined land-owner and early in 1919 became a leading figure in Princess Radzivil's political salon, then in Warsaw, together with other like-minded aristocrats such as Roman Skirmunt, in an unsuccessful endeavour to rally the Polish nobility to the acceptance of an independent Belaruś. His son Ihnat an agriculturalist was a victim of Stalinist repression; his grandson Jazep Pazniak- Vajnilovič (1924-1989) served in the *BKA* (Belarusian Local Defence Force) during the Nazi-Soviet conflict, and later became Chairman of the New York branch of the Belarusian-American Association.

After the Treaty of Riga (1921), the Bolshevik regime converted the church into a cinema, and it was subsequently renamed the "Youth Theatre". It escaped serious damage during the Nazi-Soviet conflict: refurbished in 1975, it was then converted into a film studio and Cin-



ema club. It became popular as a venue for democratic intellectuals, and its situation adjacent to Government house made it a convenient meeting-place for opposition groups. Here on 19th October 1988, after the discovery at Kurapaty of the mass-graves of Bolshevik terror victims from the 1930's, was held the inaugural meeting of the militant national organisation *Martyraloh Belarusi*; and a year later it witnessed meetings and rallies of the leading opposition political group, the *Belarusan Popular Front*. Both organisations came to enjoy the wide support of Belarusan intellectuals such as Janka Bryl, Nil Hilevič, Zianon Pazniak and many others. After the Declaration of Independence of 25th August 1991 the *Red Church* was restored to its original use as a place of worship. Services of the Catholic Church are conducted there in Belarusan as well as in Polish, together with occasional revival concerts of national Church Music. In the gardens is a red-brick presbytery on three floors, also in the *art nouveau* style.

To the east of the church, between vul. Bersan and vul. Sviardlova, facing the square, lies a block of two substantial **Residential apartment buildings**, both in the *Art nouveau* style and dating from the beginning of the 20th-c. The first (no. 17), occupying the corner-site on the vul. Bersan is constructed of red brick with white stucco cornices, window lintels, sill-panels, balconies, torus-moulding and doorway surrounds. Constructed in 1912 by the Belarusan architect S. Hajdukievič (1876-1937), the principal façade is divided by a slightly projecting portico comprising a doorway, central staircase window and a large arched window with a balcony and a horizontally truncated pediment with a triple dormer window, balcony and side windows and hipped roof. On either side of the portico two assymetrical wings of equal length carry paired or triple windows with second and third floor balconies to the east and an oriel window to the west. It is reminiscent of a comfortable Baltic-Dutch mercantile ensemble.

Immediately to the east is another substantial apartment house (no. 19), dating from the first decade of the present century, a work of the architect H. Haj. A narrow central portico over the portal culminates in a cornice and pediment above an arched window flanked by two urns on pedestals. The fourth floor arched fenestration with its triangular pediments and flanking pilasters form a "T" shape of stucco with the vertical windows and face-panels of the central portico, in agreeable contrast to the predominant red-brick of the first three floors. The arched fenestration of the second floor with its stuccoed archivolt, matches that of the fourth floor, whereas the ground and third floor fenestration is squared, with lateral pilasters and blind-balconies. A plaque com-



memorates the residence here of a leading figure of the Belarusian musical renaissance, Hryhor Šyrma (1892-1978). Trained as a teacher, he soon gained a reputation as an outstanding choirmaster and conductor, became active in the cultural life of Western Belarus, then under Polish rule, and led the Choir of the Belarusian Students Union in Vilnia. From 1940 to 1970 he directed the Belarusian State Academic choir in Minsk. His principal achievement lay in the collection and publication of Belarusian folk-music: "200 Belarusian folksongs" (1958) and "Belarusian Folksongs" (1959-1976) in four volumes. The building also housed the City council of the Communist Youth Organisation, whose premises became the headquarters of the 'unofficial' *Talaka* (1987) progressive nationalist movement. This began as a youth group, rediscovering Belarusian history and culture by organising lectures and community singing together with other social activities; later the group became politicised and began to play an important role in the process of democratisation. On the east side of Independence Square opposite the Central Post Office stands the Hotel "Minsk" occupying the site of the pre-1914 *Novo-Berlin* Hotel, where Harvey Lee Oswald the future reputed assassin of the American President Kennedy resided for a time during the first days of his stay in the Belarusian capital in 1959. Turning left past the Šyrma house into the north end of vul. Sviardlova, the art-nouveau ensemble is continued by an attractive two-storied pitched roof apartment house (no. 4) with rectangular fenestration and a centrally placed balcony on the upper level. The principal feature of the house is the entrance on the south side surmounted by two vertical staircase windows with a transome and stucco surround, and at roof level an arched pediment. A little further on is an art deco regional catering manufactory built in 1936 on two floors with a ground level flat roofed semicircular terraced area, with behind it a glazed bow-ended tower. In addition to the manufactory the building houses a well-known restaurant, the *Paparac kvetka* \*, a buffet, a vegetarian cafe and a convivial bar. A short walk brings the visitor back to the Square.

The most striking building in Independence Square is **Government House\*\***, built in a characteristic constructivist style of the Cubist school by the leading Belarusian architect of the day, Ja. Langbard (1882-1951). It has played a historic role in the evolution of the young Belarusian Republic, more particularly during the period preceding National Independence in 1991. The design was the prize-winning entry of an All-Union competition in 1929, in which a number of leading architects - M. Ginzburg, L. Rudnev, N. Trotzky and I. Fomin, (the designer of the Minsk *Jubilejny Dom* )- took part. Construction work began in



1930 and was completed in 1934. A team of young Belarusan sculptors, working under the direction of M. Kerzin (a graduate of the St-Petersburg and the prestigious Viciebsk Art Schools) - A. Bembel, V. Ritter, Z. Azhur, A. Hlebaú and A. Arlou contributed to the embellishment of the interior. The building comprises a central "T"-shaped block on nine floors dominated by two projecting narrow towers flanking the portico, with two symmetrical lateral "L" shaped wings on six floors, enclosing an open central space, 100 metres wide by 50 metres in depth, with a monumental statue facing the Square. In the central block between the two towers, a massive circular moulding displays the emblem of the Belarusan Republic. Apart from this, the decorative element of the design is made up simply of the juxtaposition of rectangular and cubic blocks in descending stepped elevation from the central block to the wings, together with bands of regular vertical and horizontal fenestration of different dimensions. The style appears to owe much to the Chicago school of Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), Holabird and Roche, and Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959) which led the world in the new field of *art deco* architecture, and of which Stalin was said to have been an admirer. Despite Langbard's masterly handling of constructivist cubist forms, the monolithic exterior of Government House is difficult for the individual to relate to, and is perhaps symbolic of the ultimate inability of a remote administrative system to establish a human rapport with the ordinary citizen.

The interior state-foyers, halls, vestibules and appartments are on a more accessible human scale, and are remarkable examples of *art deco* interior design. The entrance foyer was decorated with a gallery of statues of fashionable philosophers, social theoreticians and political activists of their day such as Gracchus Babeuf (1760-1797), Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) and others. The vestibules, foyers, conference rooms and the session hall of the Supreme Council are decorated with paintings, frescoes, bands of bas-reliefs, moulded ceilings, wall-pilasters, steles, wall lamps and candelabras; they constitute a rare example of lavish civic interior decoration of the 1930s. The bas-reliefs of Andrej Bembel (1905-19\*\*) provide particularly interesting examples of Socialist romantic art, with their visionary scenes of the French Revolution (1789), the proclamation of the Marxist manifesto (1848), the Paris Commune (1871), Liebknecht leading the Spartak rebellion in Germany and the uprising of colonial nations in the Far East. Other bronzes, depicting idealised scenes of industrialisation and the establishment under Stalin of collective farming, workers at leisure, a scientists laboratory and the creation of an art for the people, are spiritually akin to the



popular-classical art of National Socialist Germany in the 1930s. Similar didactic works by Ritter and Izmailov decorate the walls of the hall of the former Presidium of the Supreme Council. Since Independence the seat of Parliament has been shifted to the erstwhile Communist party headquarters in Central Square; the former *Dom Urada* now houses a number of ministerial departments and miscellaneous Government offices.

On the west side of Independence square lies the **Pedagogical Institute\***. Initially founded in Minsk in 1914 to promote education in the Belarusian language, it attracted a number of well-known educationalists, in particular U. Ihnatoúski (1881-1931) and R. Astroúski (1887-1976). Reorganised in 1918, Prof. V. Ivanoúski (1880-1943) delivered the first course of scientific lectures at the Institute in the Belarusian language on "Non-organic chemistry". In the summer of 1919 the Council of the Pedagogical Institute placed itself under the authority of the Belarusian National *Rada* (Council). Established in 1921 under the Soviets as a faculty of the Belarusian National University, it became an independent institution in 1931 and now has its own Departments of mathematics, physics, biology, philology, history, music pre-school and primary teaching, and education for the handicapped. The main corpus of the institute was built in 1931 by Lauroú and Zaparožac, and reconstructed to an original and attractive neo-classical design on three floors by H. Zaborski in 1949-1953. The main façade is a plain finely proportioned rectangle comprising in its central section three vertical windows over a low, rectangular entrance portico with three doors. A flat lintel with an entablature, decorated frieze and architrave rests on four pairs of corinthian columns with the exception of the two outermost squared pillars which have *bas-relief* carved capitals. A low flight of steps leads to the entrance, and the portico is flanked on either side by a round-arched window. A narrow cornice runs round the ground floor level. The three vertical windows over the portico are set between pilasters in a recessed panel, and are each divided by vertical mullions and a transom. Inset at the base between the mullions of each window is a diminutive ornamental frame and triangular pediment. Two recessed roundels set into the wall above the ground-floor arched windows contain busts of the educationalists V. Bialinski and K. Ušynski. The roof-level lintel frieze is decorated with festoons, rectangular plaques and allegorical *bas-reliefs* depicting the attributes of science. The asymmetrical wings of the central façade have attractive segmentally arched side-entrances beneath festoon mouldings. The views of this ensemble have unfortunately been obstructed by a 14-storey tower-block facing onto Indepen-



dence Square. The Institute accommodates more than 4.000 students, and is geared toward the the teaching of foreign languages, in particular English, French and German.

Between the West wing of the Dom Urada and the Pedagogical Institute, a surviving segment of the former main street of the city vul. Zacharieúskaja ( *Savieckaja* ), has preserved, in addition to the *Art nouveau* ensemble on the north side of *Plac Niezależności*, two notable 19th century buildings. A mid-century brick and stucco **Burgher House** (no. 2) on two floors, with cornice, pitched roof and side-wings is illustrative of the adaptability of the traditional long frontage to treatment in the grand manner. A lower level of rusticated outer wall and nine plain rectangular windows is separated by an intermediate double cornice from a second level of nine arched windows, with two symmetrically placed, off-centre small balconies and end windows flanked by plain pilasters. The building now serves as administrative offices. A more involved *Art nouveau* design is a distinctive feature of an L-shaped, three storey apartment block with a symmetrical frontage of two slightly projecting lateral façades of three rectangular windows and central box-balcony to each floor, and a central, narrower portico façade comprising entrance door, wide arched first-floor window with semi-circular wrought-iron balcony, and twin second floor windows. The three façades are each flanked by three tiers of twin windows with plain moulded surrounds and a pattern of horizontal and vertical plain moulded struts ornamenting the entire upper frontage. Below an intermediate cornice, the ground floor outer wall is horizontally rusticated. The portico façade terminates in a massive segmentally-arched dormer; the lateral façades in two larger triple-arched dormers. The diagonally-sectioned corner of the building have narrow windows and attractive semi-circular balconies.

Vul. Savieckaja ends on *Plac Miasnikova*, bordered on the southeastern side by some *Italianate apartment houses* \*. The street of that name on the right, formerly known as Nova-Zachareúskaja, and after 1893 as *Nova-Maskoúskaja*, although a little off the tourist track, has a few interesting buildings: a two-storied human-scale *Polyclinic* dating from 1928 (no. 26), two rows of late *19th century houses* ( nos. 38, 74, and 76; and nos. 11a, 11b, 11v, 11h. and 13), and the clean-lined **Theatre of Musical Comedy**, built in 1981 (*Architects*: A. Tkačuk and U. Taranoúski ).

Reverting to Independence Square, on the South side stands a group of buildings representing different 20th century architectural trends in the capital - the City hall, the Metropolitan building and the National



University of Belaruś. At the eastern end of the Square, nearest the Central Post Office lies the **City Hall** constructed in 1964 to a functional rectangular design by S. Musinski and H. Sysojaú. Thirty plain vertical piers sustain a slab entablature with a narrow cornice and flat roof. The principal decorative effect is provided by the regular five floor high vertical fenestration and piers. A central portico made up of three vertical window elements of narrow mullions and transomes over a projecting cantilever porch and two symmetrically disposed side porticos each with a single vertical window, also having narrow mullions, transomes and a ground-floor projecting flat-roofed porch. The other vertical windows, twelve to each side of the central portico, are set back with recessed balconies on each floor. The entrance lobby is of similar functional appearance with plain tiled floors, cylindrical supporting piers and rectangular steles, functional open staircase and circular ceiling apperture lights. The building comprises rooms and offices for civic business, a spacious session Chamber, and an exhibition hall. The right wing of the building before Independence housed the Soviet Belarusan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

To the west of the City Hall facing Independence Square lies the **Minsk Metropolitan building\***, a six-storied asymmetrical construction rising in Ziggurat-style stepbacks to a central tower of nine floors with, at the uppermost level, a clock and a bronze weathercock by the artist Ju. Lubimaú. The tower counterbalances the moderately high-rise central façade block of the *Dom Urady* on the opposite side of Independence Square. At the base of the bow-fronted tower lit by a vertical multi-floor window, an entrance porch of polished grey granite gives access to the *Independence Square Metro station*. Built in 1984 to a design by Ju. Hryhoreú and Dz. Kudraúcoú, the edifice serves as offices for the management and operation of the underground railway system. Station sites are indentifiable in the street by the letter-logo "M".

The city of Minsk transport network has been greatly improved in recent years by the construction, started in 1977, of an underground railway system, originally planned to consist of three lines intersecting at "Central Square (*Kastryčnicki*)," "Station Square (*Pryvaksalny*)" and "Jubilee Square (*Jubilejny*)". The First line was to follow the axis of Skaryna Avenue linking the north-eastern to the south-western districts of the city (17,6 km.). A second line was to link the western suburbs to the south-eastern district and the Minsk motor works (19 km.); and a third line was planned to connect the southern area to the north eastern suburbs (16 km.) The First Line was completed in 1988 with nine stations: "Eastern" station, "Moscow", "Čaluskincaú Park", "Acad-



emy of Sciences", "Jakub Kolas Square", "Victory Square", "October Square", "Independence Square" and "Institute of Culture" stations. The first limb of the Second Line was completed in 1990 with a further six stations operating: "Tractor Factory", "Proletarska", "Peršamajskaja", "Kupalouškaja", "Niamiha", and "Frunzenskaja" stations are now operating. Minsk thus becomes the fifteenth European capital to have an underground railway after London (1860), Budapest (1896), Paris (1900), Berlin (1902), Madrid (1919), Moscow (1935) Brussels (1952), Rome (1955), Kiev (1960), Lisbon, Vienna, Athens, Istanbul and Oslo. Each of the architect designed stations takes the form of a rectangular Hall with a central platform serving both up- and down-town lines; some have arched roofs, some are flat roofed and some are colonnaded. The Minsk metro is unquestionably a tourist attraction as well as a highly economical convenience, though perhaps lacking the leisurely charm of the old city horse-drawn trams or *Konki*.

Much of the area between Independence Square and the precincts of Minsk railway station on the southern side of the connecting vul. St. Petersburg is occupied by the campus of the **Belarusan National University**, one of the four principal universities of the Republic. The main building facing the Square is of recent construction dating from 1960 (*Arch.* M. Baklanaú), and is of a standard functional design - a rectangular façade of six floors with a projecting west wing on five floors with vertical fenestration set between piers extending from basement plinth to the roof-level cornice and entablature. A central geometrical grid-shaped portal with four entrance doors set between plain granite piers gives access to the entrance lobby and *auditoria*, lecture rooms and offices of the University. The Campus site extends over the area the west end of Independence square, vul. St. Peterburha, and vul. Babrujska adjacent to the Central Railway Station. At the rear of the present main building lies the earlier University building erected to a functional *art deco* design by Laúrou and Zaparožac in 1928-1931. Badly damaged during the Nazi-Soviet War, the building was restored and modified in 1945-1949. Other buildings and annexes include the Law Faculty and the Faculty of Geography buildings, both of a functional character and not noted for their architectural distinction, although the Campus gardens are attractively laid out.

Prior to the long-delayed, formal inauguration of the National University in Minsk in 1919, the traditional Belarusan centre of learning had been the *Stefan Batory Academy* (1579) initially founded by the Jesuits, and established as a University in 1803, in the former capital of the Grand Duchy, Vilnia. The renowned Jesuit Academy founded in



Polack in 1580, however, was closed down by the Tsars in 1820 without achieving University status. As a result, within the predominantly Belarusian "North-western region" under the Russian Tsars, there was not a single University, and would-be students had to attend Dorpat (Tartu), St. Petersburg, Moscow or Kiev for their higher education. The lack of institutions for advanced studies in Belaruś had been the subject of debate in the Imperial Russian Duma, and already at the beginning of 1914 Belarusian nationalist deputies were demanding the setting up at the latest by 1919 of a University to serve the 13 million inhabitants of the six Belarusian provinces, beginning with Institutes of Agriculture and Engineering, and a Faculty of Medicine in Minsk to start by 1915.

These plans were delayed by the First World War, but at the All-Belarusian Congress held in Minsk in December 1917 Professor Karski presented a plan for organising a Belarusian University in Minsk, the proposed statute of which was published in the national newspaper *Volnaja Belaruś* ("Free Belaruś") in 1918. A symbolic session of a Belarusian Popular University was also organised in Moscow during July and August 1918, with the participation of the historian Ūl. Pičeta and the Belarusian radical-socialist writer Ciška Hartny.

On 25th February 1919 it fell to the newly proclaimed Belarusian Soviet Republic formally to set up a State University in Minsk, and the foundation was opened in 1921 with Professor Pičeta as the first Rector (1921-1929). A University Library was formed round the private collections of the eminent Belarusian ethnographers Professors Ja. Karski (1861-1931) and M. Jańčuk (1859-1921). Its activities started with three Faculties of Medicine, Labour and Social Studies. In the first academic year there was a total of 1,390 enrolled undergraduates, 49 lecturers and 14 Professors. Among the early teaching staff were the poet Jakub Kolas (1882-1956), I. Zamocin, M. Piatuchovič, P. Buzuk, and I. Voúk-Levanovič. Damaged by bombardment during the Nazi-Soviet conflict (1941-1945), the buildings were restored and extended; by 1987 there were more than 16,000 undergraduates, including 1000 foreign students from 78 countries. The number of departments had grown to include Faculties of philology, history, law, journalism, applied mathematics, pure mathematics, physics, radio-physics, chemistry, biology and geography. The curriculum included morning and evening, as well as external courses. The teaching and technical staff of 5,500 comprises some 103 Professors. In addition there is a computer centre, 3 museums (historical, geological and zoological), a botanical garden and a library with well in excess of 2 million books. The University produces its own gazette: "Belarusian University", as well as an academic publication in four



series: "The Belarusian National University Journal". It also corresponds with a number of international universities, in particular in the United States, Great Britain and Israel. Among English academics to have lectured at the University of Minsk are Professor Arnold B. McMillin, the well-known author of many works on Belarusian literature, including the authoritative *History of Belarusian Literature from its origins to the present day* (Giessen 1977), and James Dingley of the School of Slavonic Studies at London University.

Through vul. Babrujskaja access is gained to the monumental **Station Square\*** (*Plac Pryvaksalny*). The present appearance of the precinct owes much to the former timber-frame station of the old Libava-Romenski railway line, which was opened to provide transport for cereals from the Ukraine to the Baltic between 1871-1879. In Minsk the line was served by the wooden-built Vilnia railway station. The earlier Moscow-Warsaw line was served by the Bierascie railway station a little further to the West, with communications between the two lines being provided by a horse-drawn tram service - the *konki* of old Minsk.

Both the earliest **Station**, and its brick-built successor in the 1890s, were embellished by towers on either side of the main entrance, the latter of which took on a distinctly gingerbread-like appearance. From this station many thousands of Belarusian immigrants, Christian and Jewish, set forth to find a better life in Western Europe, North America and Argentina. The Minsk poet Bahdanovič recalled the poignant realities of exile in his *Emihrackaja piesnia* ("Emigrants song" [1914]), when he wrote: "We dream of the village, the Nioman, / and Libava with harbour lights gleaming". Emigration is also the subject of Vincuk Advažny's humorous verse tale: *Jak Hanula úbirałasia ú Arhientinu* ("How Hanula planned to go to Argentina" [1930]).

When after the Nazi-Soviet conflict the heavily bombed railway precinct was rebuilt, the new station consisted of a towered and porticoed entrance with a large semi-circular window to the main hall surmounted by a triangular pediment; on either side symmetrical, pilastered wings faced with wrought-iron balconies onto the station Square. With the usual ticket office, restaurant, buffet and left luggage offices in a classical style, the Minsk *Vilnia* Station was, with the exception of the Breughelesque waiting areas and "rest-room" facilities, a recognisable piece of railway architecture for the Western traveller. A number of plaques commemorate visit by notables of the former regime: one records the passing through the station of trains carrying *V. Ulianov-Lenin* into exile in 1895 and 1900. It is not specified whether he actually alighted there. Uncommemorated was a rare official visit of the Russian *Tsar*



*Nicholas II* on 22nd October 1914, during a tour of inspection of the Army, in the course of which he met local officials, nobility and clergy in the Upper Town. More entertaining, perhaps, was the whistle-stop visit to Minsk of the Russian Revolutionary *M. Kalinin* on 20th June 1919, aboard his heavily beflagged *agitprop* train "October Revolution", draped with rousing slogans, to whip up support for the Bolshevik cause in the mainline cities of the former Russian Empire. He used the occasion to address bemused "proletarian" school-children from the balcony of the former Basilian Monastery in Cathedral Square. Kalinin was accompanied on this whistle-stop *tournee* by the Hrodnia-born Bolshevik historian Samuil Ahurski (1884-1947), whose Yiddish-Hebrew misspellings of his own name earned him the sobriquet of "Azurski". After 1906 he resided for a time in England as a political emigre; he later became Director of the Minsk Historical Institute of the Belarusan Academy of Sciences. The Station building is now once again being reconstructed to adapt to modern conditions.

The main impact in the station precinct is created by the astonishing access to the station square from the vul. Mahazinaja (*Kirava*), between two *piece montee* Towers constructed in a style not inaptly known as "neo-Babylonian", flanked by massive five-floored wings, with multiple balconies and turrets. For some inscrutable, possibly jocular reason, this magnificently Stalinist eccentricity has been adopted to adorn the projected post-Independence rouble currency bills. The bizarre concept of the ensemble designed by one P. Stoler in 1939 and completed in 1947 by M. Baklanaú (b.1914), - whose better works include the classical façade to the *Choral Synagogue* (1950) and the Belarusan *National Art Museum* (1954), - appears to have been inspired by the two flamboyant towers on the old Railway station of the 1890s. The base of each tower is raised on eight floors, and features a relatively small entrance door between two large vertical arched windows, each with a *voussoir*. Between them a small *oeil de boeuf* window, surmounted by a third floor arched window, balcony and stucco festoons form an ill-proportioned medley of variagated appertures and rosette-shaped plaques. Two intermediate cornices divide the lower four levels from the upper four floors of which the central feature is a superposition of triple recesses on two floors, with arched and rectangular windows as well as balustrades between concave arched niches and moulded roundels. Above a crowning cornice and moulded parapet rises a second step-back, belvedere-like tower of four floors comprising further tiered conglomerations of rectangular, loopholed and arched windows, recessed panels, moulded roundels, festoons and cornices, surmounted by a coronet of pinnacles.



Some of the more extravagant finials and corner statuary have since been trimmed. A small castellated clock turret on each tower completes the extraordinary whole. The towers on vul. Mahazynaja (*Kirava*) and their wings facing the Station are residential (nos. 1 and 2), though the second building has a first floor cafe with an atmosphere and standards of comfort conditioned by travellers from the nearby station awaiting train departures and arrivals.

The *Vilnia station* played an important part in the history of Minsk during the first bid for national Independence in 1917. Premises near a large railway shed in the vicinity of the main station [*no longer extant*] served as a venue for the adjourned First All-Belarusan Congress held in December of that year, after armed Bolsheviks had broken up the first meetings in the Municipal Theatre. Although Bolsheviks such as Razaúski were present at the Congress, and a delegation of participants was expected from St. Petersburg, the Bolshevik Commandant of Minsk *Krivošejn* arrived drunk, it is said, in the evening of the 17th December with armoured cars and machine-guns to close the meeting, but not before the Congress had passed a resolution vesting its authority in an All-Belarusan Rada ("Council"). The following morning the remainder of the Congress met clandestinely in a place made available to them by a participant Adamovič, under the protection of the railway workers of the Libava-Romny station, to protest at the Bolshevik intervention and to adopt an historic seven point resolution implementing the Congress' call for national self-determination, as voted the previous day in the face of Krivoshein's rowdy intervention.

A second time, during the skirmishes between the Rada forces and the Bolsheviks on the night of 18th February 1918, the railway workers intervened to prevent the flight to the Station of Karl Lander, "Chairman of the Soviet of Commissars of the Western Region" (*sic*) and his Bolshevik guards loaded with arms and loot, from Jezavitaú's pursuing units to avoid capture by the advancing Germans. As Lander himself related, their plan to leave Minsk by rail was foiled: "At the railway station attempts were made to stop us by inciting the railroad workers against us. Finally they derailed our train: two cars were overturned and my car was derailed." (*Vpered*, no. 1, 1922). A rumour floated by the *Rada*, that a German armoured train was approaching Minsk, also helped keep the retreating Bolsheviks on the move by road. In 1990 it was again the railway-workers of Belaruś who, joining the Minsk car-workers, helped hasten the demise of the Old Regime by launching a series of damaging strikes, including blocking the railway tracks at Orša in protest against the governments economic policies. No doubt a fit-



ting monument will one day remind the passer-by of the prime revolutionary role of the patriotic Minsk railway-workers.

Leaving Station Square, the visitor may follow the vul. Babrujskaja westwards under the road bridge, left into vul. Maskoúskaja. This road gives access to an entire area of wood-frame cottages which are worth viewing in the summer months, as examples of the evolution of urban architecture in the capital. Turn left again into vul. Mala-Hiarhieúskaja (*Rabkaróuskaja*) where a modest timber-frame house on a single level with a pitched roof and an attic, was for a time the home of three leading Minsk *literati* of the *Naša Niva* era - Zmitrok Biadula, Maxim Bahdanovič and Zoska Vieras. The **Biadula house Museum** \* is divided into two parts; on the right hand side is a single roomed flat; on the left there are two rooms. On the street front both apartments have independent entrances each with a portico approached by a low flight of steps. The left-hand flat was occupied from 1915 to 1919 by one of the most accomplished of Belarusan writers, Zmitrok Biadula and his sister. For a time between September 1916 and February 1917, before leaving to convalesce in Yalta, the poet Maxim Bahdanovič (1891-1917) occupied the flat on the right. In 1919 it became the home of the authoress Zoska Vieras (b.1892), and another frequent guest was Aleś Čarviakoú (1892-1938), the political activist; he played a preponderant role in bringing the Bolsheviks to recognise and cater for the national aspirations of the Belarusan people.

The figure of Zmitrok Biadula (1886-1941) is a curious one. Born Samuil Plaúnik, the son of a farmer of Jewish religion and forester from the Lahojšk region outside Minsk to the north east, he received his formal education in a Litvak synagogue *chedar* and later in a *yeshiva*., where the mysterious and jewelled imagery of the Hasidic *Cabala* appears to have lingered in the air. In an evocative short poem he recalls how, surrounded by his hungry family waiting for supper in the dying evening light: "His fiddle my father is playing, / A mournful Hasidic lamenting." Whilst living among, and mixing with the local Christian population, he also became steeped in Belarusan folklore. He began his literary activity by publishing his Belarusan verse and prose works in *Naša Niva* ("Our cornfield"), a journal of which he later became editorial secretary. His poems are unselfconscious and highly sophisticated, with an imagery steeped in folk tradition, combined with a fancy as strangely beautiful as Joseph's legendary dream-coat. His description of the mythical folk-god Jaryla in *Napradviesni* ("At the Dawn of Spring") illustrates the other-worldly atmosphere which haunts his works: "A ray of light above him like a fiery eagle hovered, / Wading



after him the attendant Elders came. / Their forms grew tall like trees of a wild thicket coppice, / And in their hands they carried an eternal Spring. / Light murmurs filled the air, there was worship in the forest, / And a mysterious bell roused the earth from slumbering" (*transl.* V. Rich). He became firmly committed to the idea of a third path for his native country, leading neither to Moscow or Warsaw as in times past, but to somewhere else "far off, to the very sun". After collaborating with the right-wing journal *Zvon* ("The Bell") in Minsk (1919), he came to accept the prospects opened by the socialist ideal, and took up with the Belarusian Bolsheviks, editing *Volny Sciach* ("The Free Banner"), and joining the *Maładniak* literary club in 1923. He is remembered chiefly for his early 'rich and strange' romantic poems from the *Abrazki* ("Images") cycle (1912), for his patriotic verse *Prysiaha* ("The Vow") his short stories, and his many-faceted historical novel *Salaviej* ("The Nightingale").

Apart from housing mementos of its literary connections, one of the rooms served as the first *Chapel* of the Greek Catholic (Uniate) parish where from 1989 the colourful Fr. Jan Matusievič celebrated the Holy Liturgy in the Belarusian language, before removing to the present *Chapel of St. Euphrosyne* in the picturesque *Vilensčuki*, in the Upper Town.

Further down the vul. Mala-Heorhieŭskaja (*Rabkarou'skaja*) lies the **Minsk Institute of Culture** (no.17), founded in 1975 on the basis of the Faculties of Librarianship and Bibliography of the Minsk Pedagogical Institute and the Cultural Awareness Department of the Belarusian Institute of Theatrical Arts. By 1984 the Institute of Culture had Faculties of Cultural awareness activities, Librarianship and Bibliography, with 362 lecturers and 9 Professors for more than 4,200 students. The Institute lies conveniently close to the *Metro* station named after it.

The area to the north-west of the *Biadula house Museum* is particularly noted for the number and interest of the **Wood-frame cottages\***, which still survive in this part of Minsk. These are of course to be found in many of the old inner, and more recent outer suburbs of the city, in the Lachoŭka, Kamaroŭka, Rakoŭski districts, the relatively wealthy Tatar suburb and Uborki. However the oldest and perhaps the finest agglomeration of wooden dwellings in Minsk is to be found in **Hrušaŭka suburb\*\***, accessible from the Minsk Institute of Culture by following the vul. Maskoŭskaja and vul. Źaleznadarožnaja, to *Hrušaŭski zavulak* on the right. The late spring and summer are the best time to see these old cottages, when the roads are dry and the numerous trees and gardens are green and provide the appropriate rural background to a lei-



surely visit. Particularly worthy of note are the houses in *vul. Hrušaŭskaja* \* (nos. 5 and 96), *vul. Razinskaja* (nos. 19 and 20), *vul. Chmialeŭskaja* \* (with no fewer than 18 period dwellings), *vul. Macviejeŭskaja* (*Roza Luksemburha*) and *Paŭnočny zavulak* \* (nos. 18\*, 19 and 22\*). The cottages are usually disposed lengthways onto the road, and go some way to explaining the prevalence, among the brick and stone buildings in the city, of the relatively lengthy, six or seven window facades, the decoratively framed window surrounds, the intermediate cornices and the pediment-like triangular gables of the pitched roofs. Wooden houses are of an impermanent nature, but a visit to the vestiges of the old suburbs of Minsk is helpful for a proper understanding of the city and the evolution of its architecture.

## Victory Square to the Botanical Gardens - (Walkabout No.5).

*Victory Square\*\*\* - The Obelisk and precincts - Rumianceŭ House - City Gardens - vul. Zacharava - Larysa Alexandroŭskaja House - vul. Rumiancava - Dom Litarataŭ - zav. Branjavy - vul. Kazlova - Alexander Nevski Russian Church\* - Exhibition Hall - Philharmonia - St. Roch Church on Trinity Golden Hill\* - vul. Varvašeni - vul. Čyrvonnaja - The American Club\* - Jakub Kolas Square.- The Polytechnic Institute - Kastryčnik Film Theatre - Academy of Sciences\*\*\*- Museum of Art History\*\* - Surhanaŭ clinic - Kolas Literary Museum \* - Botanical Gardens \*\*- Čeluskinceŭ Park - the Vankovič manor\* - The Eastern Cemetery - Kurapaty.*

With its spacious plaza and gardens, its lofty obelisk, sweeping perspectives and elegant residential and commercial surroundings, **Victory Square\*\*\*** (*Plac Pieramohi*) in Minsk is arguably one of the finest squares in Europe and certainly, by its dimensions of 225 by 175 metres, one of the largest. It is also a solemn place in the Belarusian capital, for in the shadow of its obelisk, which to many a citizen commemorates more than one victory in his country's history, burns the eternal flame in honour of those who died in the defence their land against foreign invaders. The Tatars of Batu Khan from the south were driven back at Kruta Hora in 1249, the Teutonic knights from the north at Gruenwald in 1410, the Muscovite hosts of Basil III from the east at Orša in 1513 and the expansionist Polish legions from the west in 1920.

The feature round which the square is planned is the central Obelisk, intended as a monument to Victory in the "Great Fatherland War" of 1941-1945 erected in 1954 to a design by H. Zaborski and V. Karol, and decorated with four monumental bronze bas-reliefs by Z. Azhur (b.





### *Victory Square*

1908), A. Bembel (1905-1989), A. Hlebaŭ (1908-1968) and S. Selichanoŭ (1917-1976). Set on an octagonal base is a similarly shaped platform rising in six shallow steps from a *parterre* of flowerbeds. Four massive bronze laurel wreaths by the sculptor S. Adaškievič (b. 1918) rest horizontally on squared plinths of black marble. On a sloped podium in the centre of the octagonal base is set a squared plinth with four ornamental bronze panels and a cornice with three step-back platforms from which a grey granite obelisk rises to a tetrahedral peak. At the apex is set a stellar composition of coloured glass, bronze and mosaic. The total height of the obelisk is 40 metres, and it is curiously ornamented with horizontal bands of Belarusian folk decoration. Near the summit are inscribed the dates "1941-1945", and at its base is a quasi-heraldic bronze plaque of draped banners bearing in a wreath the State emblem of Belarus. With the surrounding apartment buildings, all constructed in the neo-classical style and of equal height, the greenery of the Svislač riverside gardens and the ribbonlike Francis Skaryna Avenue stretching away to the west, the Square and its Obelisk, whatever its shortcomings, make up a finely proportioned ensemble, and one of the most impressive sights in the city.



The theme of the monument is the victory of the Soviet State in its "Great Fatherland War" with Nazi Germany, as reflected by the four moulded bronze panels around the plinth. The bas-reliefs depict: "The 9th May 1945" - Victory day (sculpt. *A. Bembel*), "The Soviet Army" (*S. Selichanaú*), "Glory to the Fallen Heroes" (*Z. Azhur*) and "Belarusan Partisans" (*A. Hlebaú*). Numerous Belarusans were, of course drafted into the Soviet Army prior to 1941; many also were shot at Katyn near Smalensk, or deported to Siberia, whence they were allowed to leave with the Poles to fight alongside the Allies in Africa and at Monte Cassino, in the army of General Anders. Many Soviet Belarusans sought refuge in the forests to avoid deportation to Nazi camps; many also stayed at home and witnessed the atrocities committed both by Nazi death squads and Bolshevik partisan marauders on the peaceable Belarusan country-folk. Some of these, as during Napoleon's campaign in 1812, threw their lot in with the invaders in the belief that they could thereby win freedom for their country. On the western side of the obelisk, a perpetual flame burns in honour of the War dead. There is access also to an underground memorial hall to the many victims of the conflict.

The spacious square is flanked to the north and south by six symmetrically disposed residential apartment blocks, three on each side (nos. 31, 33 and 35; nos. 34, 36, and 38) constructed between 1951-1956 by a team led by the Russian architect M. Baršč. The central pair consist of a five-storied building with a porticoed central section and two wings. The projecting portico with four columns and a triangular pediment surmounts a lofty entrance archway; the side wings have an intermediate balustrade, crowning cornice and parapet and moulded stucco ornaments. The style and treatment are evocative of the English Regency style of John Nash. The lateral pairs in each group are "L"-shaped to fit corner sites. Here the distinctive features are the corner towers raised on an arcaded footwalk and squared pillars supporting charming belvedere turrets with pilasters, oval windows, moulded surrounds and concave pavilion roof. There are spired finials at the corners of each turret, and crowning diminutive cupolas, giving to the whole an almost Trans-carpathian flavour. Access to the verdant "backs" and rear gardens are by way of railed gateways and elaborate colonnaded porticos. For a number of years the Belarusan composer Ja. Cikocki (1893-1970), one of the early composers of the 'Soviet' school, occupied a flat in the central block on the south side, no. 36. He is remembered for his opera *Michas Padhorny* (1939) and his six symphonies, of which No. 4 in F major is an entertaining *postiche* of Tchaikovski.

Corner parks with lawns and trees on the western perimeter of the



Square merge into the landscaped riverside gardens of the Svislač on either side of the bridge towards the City Centre. In the south-western corner a *colonnaded portico* \*, erected in 1954 to a design by the Minsk-born architect Ju. Zaborski (b. 1906), forms the entrance to **Minsk City Park**, sometimes called the *Governors Gardens* under Tsarist rule. The park, comprising 18 hectares, was laid out by the municipality in 1790s and the first tree planted by the Russian Governor Zachar Kornejeff (1796-1806) to serve, as a pyramidal obelisk erected there proclaimed, "For the recreation of the nobility and the citizenry after their toils". A central avenue of trees led to the river, another followed the river bank and a third led to a large pavilion with a handsome colonnade. Amenities included an open-air theatre, a "Lovers walk", a cycle track and a garden restaurant. The gardens are still a favourite resort for children, having in addition to other attractions a **Planetarium** and refreshment kiosks.

On the north-western side there is an attractive view \* up the river-front of vul. Spitalnaja (*Kamunistyčnaja*) to a particularly fine group of neo-classical municipal buildings with colonnaded façades and an elegant tower and spire erected in 1946-1948 to a design by the Russian architect V. Husieú. The most impressive pillared façade is that of the Minsk garrison headquarters. In the adjacent riverside gardens stands a reconstruction of a particularly well-appointed wood-framed town house, comprising a long façaded ground floor and attic level of a type to be found in the *Hrušaúka* and other suburbs. Its rectangular windows with white painted lintels, frames and shutters enhance the green-painted clapboard walls, entrance porch and pitched roof with characteristic drip-board roof-cornice. The **Rumiancaú house**\* owes its present prominence to the role of its owner, a railway employee, in social democratic politics prior to the Bolshevik revolution. In 1898 the first congress of the Russian Social Democratic party was held here; the building now houses a museum illustrating the social and economic life of the country in the latter part of the 19th century. It is an attractive example of an old fashioned country-town dwelling.

On the eastern side of Victory Square, two symmetrically disposed five-floored buildings (nos. 37 and 40) form a crescent, intersected by the main Avenue, as a background to the central obelisk. The concave façades are plain, a decorative effect being achieved by the disposition of the windows in two vertical recesses with pilasters and balustrades, alternating with three lower oriel-like projections surmounted by small triangular cornices between returns. The pattern is repeated in the wings projecting into the Avenue and the lateral streets (vul. Zacharava and



vul. Kisialova), and enhanced by the contrast between white and pastel-shaded colour wash. The northern block houses the *Kristall* retail store, specialising in fine glass, crystal and porcelaine; in the southern ensemble are located two Cafe-restaurants with fine views out onto the Square - *Bryhantina* \* and *Biariozka*.

Leaving the East end of the square on the right hand side, the visitor enters by way of vul. Zacharava, into an elegant quarter of Minsk, whose architect designed mansions and villas are now much favoured by foreign embassies and international organisations, but which were formerly the luxurious residences of the establishment's privileged elite. On the left is the corpus of the *Minsk Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages*, founded in 1948, where some four thousand students are able to follow at a high level courses in the English, French, German and Spanish languages. The teaching staff, which includes 9 Professors, numbers approximately 600 lecturers and teachers.

There is a row of villa-style buildings of grey granite on the right, one of which (no. 26) houses the German Embassy and the British Consulate. An attractive **mansion**\* (no. 28) in the Palladian style with a rotunda is the headquarters of the *Belarusan Association for Friendship and Cultural relations with Foreign countries*: its impressive tapestried reception hall looks out onto an attractive garden.

A little further up the road a detached residence in a garden was the *town house* (no. 27) of the legendary Belarusan opera singer Larysa Alexandroúskaja (1904-1980). One of the earliest graduates of the *Belarusan Musical Technicum*, she studied singing with the celebrated Anton Banačič at the Minsk Opera studio (1930-1933). Having entertained the Bolshevik troops during their wars of intervention (1919-1924), she toured Germany and Sweden as a Belarusan team with the eminent cymbalist S. Navicki in 1927, after singing Belarusan folksongs at the International Music Festival in Frankfurth-am-Main. She is best remembered for her performances as Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust* and as *Carmen* in Bizet's Opera of that name; her renderings of the folksongs *Perapiolăcka* ("The Quail") and *Čamu ž mnje nie pieć* ("Why should I not sing?") have themselves almost entered into folklore. A memorial plaque on the house perpetuates her name. Other select residences in the street were occupied by the sculptor A. Hlebaú (1908-1968), and the botanist Mikola Smolski (no. 25), and the architect Úł. Karol (1912-1980)(no.33).

Turning right into vul. Rumiancieva, another street of detached mansions and villas, one of which is now the Polish Embassy (no. 15), leads the visitor to vul. Frunze, on a corner site of which is the recently



built (1979) but already historic Writers Club or **Dom Litaratara\*** (no. 5). The two-level building is constructed on three sides round an inner garden courtyard; a further wing has three floors. The frontage onto vul. Frunze comprises a lower entrance level and an upper level with undulating sheet concrete cladding and slab panels on either side of a central face-panel with an ornamental wrought-metal stellar motif. The interior comprises an entrance vestibule, a mezzanine foyer leading to an auditorium with 336 seats and a conference room; there is also a library, a reception hall and a cafe. The club is frequently used as a venue for local as well as international cultural gatherings, particularly those of a more avant-garde nature than is the norm. Indeed the cafe-bar achieved something of a reputation as a radical meeting place in the stormy years before Independence. The popular historical writer Ūl. Karatkievič (1930-1984) was frequently to be found at the bar of what became one of his favourite watering holes, along with other disaffected *literati*. The Club also became the meeting place of the *Tutejšyja* ("The local yokels") when they shifted from the *Jubilejny Dom* on Skaryna Avenue, and its central figures A. Sys, A. Hlobus and M. Klimkovič began to publish their 'unofficial' literary journal in the 1980s. Earnest discussion at the bar could become heated, and on occasion assumed Hibernian dimensions, with attendant peals of broken glass. After Independence the atmosphere became more staid, though the well-known Belarusian-American pop-singer *Dančyk* is reputed to have been entertained to an old-style Club *shenanigan* there during one of his visits to Minsk.

Following the vul. *Frunze\** southward, with its handsome mansions (nos. 19 and 21) facing the Park, the visitor turns left into *Braniavy zavulak\** (Špitalny S.), another discreetly elegant road favoured by retiring elder statesmen. Cichan Kisialou (1917-1983) who from 1959 to 1978 was Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Belaruś, and headed the Belarusian Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1967, spent his latter years here (no. 4). Ūl. Labanak (1907-1985), an active Bolshevik partisan during the Nazi-Soviet conflict, who for many years was First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers without having held a Ministerial portfolio, lived at the same address as Kisialou, and is commemorated by a memorial tablet, the work of the well-known sculptor Hlebaú, also a local resident. Yet another occupant of this 'grace and favour' dwelling was S. Prytycki (1913-1971), a career partisan and party propagandist, who from 1962-1968 was Secretary General of the Belarusian Bolshevik party. His memorial tablet, like the other two, is written in the Russian language. A short walk along



the vul. Zm. Biadula brings the visitor into sight of another colourful relic from the city's colonial past.

In the military cemetery on the east side of vul. Daúhabrodskaja (*Kazlova*) lies the picturesque ensemble of the **Russian Orthodox Alexander Nevsky Church** \*, built in 1898 to commemorate the victories of the Tsar's armies over the Turks in Bosnia Herzegovina and Bulgaria during the wars of 1877-1878. There a number of servicemen drafted from Belaruś into the 54th "Minsk" Infantry regiment were killed in action. A Belarusan-born General, I. Ramejka-Hurka, served with distinction during the campaigns. Russian intervention on behalf of the Bulgarian bid for independence gave the Tsar a pretext to march on Constantinople and seize a strategic foothold in Macedonia on the Mediterranean coast. At the Berlin Congress in 1878, Russia was obliged to withdraw in the face of strong opposition from the West European Great Powers.

The Church is dedicated to the Russian prince *Alexander Jaraslavič* (1220-1263) otherwise Alexander Nevsky, greatly revered in Russia as a warrior against the Swedes and the Teutonic knights, and canonised as a defender of Orthodoxy. An able politician, he became after 1245 a trusted ally and vassal of the Mongols, collecting tribute and raising auxiliaries on their behalf from among the weaker principalities of Suzdal, Tver and Riazan, thus establishing his hegemony over them. Episodically Grand Duke of Vladimir, a fiefdom he held from the Tatars, he spent a substantial part of his life as a *murza* (vassal prince) at the Court of the Great Khan in Mongolia. It is not known whether he fought with them against the Grand Duke Mindaúh at the battle of Kruta Hora in 1240. Many churches consecrated to Alexander Nevsky were built by the Russian Tsars, particularly in newly annexed territories, as tokens of their overlordship.

Like many European capitals, Minsk has been endowed with an attractive and exotic Orthodox church in the "pseudo-Russian" style, resplendent with green and gold onion domes, red-brick walls with round arched windows, stuccoed torus mouldings and attached colonettes, arched façades and trapezia, stucco and ceramic cornices, side-chapels with saucer-domes and *kokoschnik* style ogee gables. Onion-domed bell-towers are hung with the characteristic tintinabulant bells which contrast so effectively with the deep clang of the traditional Great Tom or *Tsar Kolokol*. And above the whole ensemble rises the three barred gilded crosses, symbolic of the orthodoxy of the Third Rome.

The plan of the church is cruciform, with an entrance porch and short passageway leading to a narthex and a nave, surmounted by a dome



raised on four central pillars. There are two barrel-vaulted transepts, and a sanctuary divided from the main body of the church by an elaborate iconostasis, reputedly the work of Haúryil Vijer, a painter of Moldavian origin, who lived from childhood in Minsk. In the narthex are two memorial tablets inscribed with the names of 118 Belarusan officers and draftees who lost their lives during the Russian siege of Pleven (1877) in Northern Bulgaria. Re-opened for worship during the German occupation in 1941, it was served by the learned Orthodox priest Fr Jan Kušner, later killed by partisans. His remains are interred in the nearby cemetery.

The adjacent **Military Cemetery \*\***, originally conceived as a burial ground for soldiers, has been extended since the 19th century, and is now the Minsk equivalent of the Paris *Pere Lachaise* graveyard. Here lie the great names of the Belarusan cultural renaissance, many of them murdered by the Bolsheviks during Stalin's repressions in the 1930s: the national poets Jakub Kolas (1882-1956) and Janka Kupala (1882-1942)[sculpt. *A. Anikejčyk*], the historian U. Ihnatoúski (1881-1931), the poet A. Hurlo (1892-1938), the actor U. Krylovič (1895-1937), Janka Kupala's wife U. Lucievič (1891-1960), the composer M. Sakaloúski (1902-1950), the operatic and Church composer A. Turankoú (1886-1958), the Belarusan statesman A. Čarviakoú (1875-1937), the novelist Kuzma Čorny (1900-1944), the poetess P. Trus (1904-1929), and many others.

Proceeding down vul. Daúhabrodskaja (*Kazlova*), a road on the right vul. *Zalataja Horka* ("Golden Hill") is named after the suburban area of gardens and trees, which from 1917, to 1920 served episodically as a place of execution for "undesirable elements", arrested during the night, and summarily shot without trial by the Bolshevik *Črezvyčajniki* ("special units") - a practice later repeated by the Nazi *Sicherheitsdienst*. Further down towards Skaryna Avenue, a substantial functional building (*architects*: S. Musinski and N. Kraúkoú) has served since 1973 as a national and international exhibition centre, known as the **Palace of Arts**. The façade consists of a ground-level gallery with an upper floor raised on rectangular piers, and plain intermediate cornice with vertical windows of equal dimension divided by thirty-six narrow pilons, surmounted by a plain cornice and flat roof. Access to the exhibition hall is gained by a flight of steps and an asymmetrical cantilever portico. The interior is of dressed stone, panelling and decorative plasterwork. There are three exhibition areas for paintings, graphic art and general decorative arts, a mezzanine gallery, lecture-rooms, offices for gallery staff, and a coffee-bar. A small inner court-yard serves in the



summer for displays of sculptures and ceramics. In 1993 the gallery organised a historical exhibition to mark the 75th anniversary of the Proclamation of Belarusian Independence on 25th March 1918. The opening ceremony was conducted by the author Vasyl Bykaú, in the presence of the H. Buralkin, President of the Guild of Artists and the popular Belarusian-American singer Dančyk.

Reverting to the main Avenue, turn right toward the Plac Jakuba Kolasa and the **Philharmonia** building at the corner of vul. Čyrvonazornaja. Established in 1937, it was intended to gather under one roof a number of independent musical groups such as the *Academic Symphony Orchestra of Belaruś*, the *State Folk Orchestra*, the *Belarusian State String quartet*, and the *Belarusian Folksong and Dance ensemble*. Since 1945 these have increased in number and now include other famous groups - the Minsk Chamber orchestra, the Ancient music ensemble *Cantabile*, the *Chamber Choir of Belaruś*, the popular "Charoški", "Vierasy" and "Piesniary" folk-ensembles. The Chamber Choir of Belaruś, a young and vigorous group, have been acclaimed on West European tours for their unique performances of Belarusian Church Music. The three-storied Philharmonia building was begun in 1955 and completed in 1963 to a design by H. Beniadziktaú, combining features of classical architecture with modernistic constructivism. There is an entrance portico facing the Avenue with six squared columns partially fluted, schematic capitals, entablature and triangular dentilled pediment. The lateral façade consists of an asymmetrically disposed bow-front with vertical windows on the two lower levels, a crowning cornice and triangular pediment. The interior comprises an entrance foyer on two floors, a mezzanine gallery, decorated with a Tapestry symbolising *Music* by the artists Niamcoú, Tkačoú and Jackin (1976). The Concert hall has 996 seats and is equipped with an organ installed by Bohemian specialists. Smaller premises for Chamber orchestra and Choir are available in the Catholic Church behind the Philharmonia building. The hall was the venue of a Commemorative meeting and concert on 25th March 1993 to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Independence of Belaruś, in the presence of the Speaker of Parliament Stanislau Šuškievič, the last President of the Rada of the Belarusian Republic in exile, Dr. Jazep Sažyc and a number of leading personalities, including Nil Hilievič, Vasyl Bykaú and Zianon Pazniak.

Located in the verdant "backs" behind the *Philharmonia*, the former Cemetery of St. Roch has now been laid out as a garden. The small **Church of the Holy Trinity and St. Roch\*** on Golden Hill is one of the few buildings in Minsk constructed in a traditional Western Gothic style.



In addition to several churches of the Greek-rite, a Roman Catholic church had been built in Minsk during the Middle-ages as a royal foundation of Grand Duke Jahajla (c.1348-1434). Built of wood, it was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and to the Assumption of Our Lady, but it was destroyed by fire in 1409. Another Church was built in the suburb of Plebany in 1460, but little is known of its history. In 1600 a Church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, endowed by Sofia Sluškova *nee* Zaviša out of the proceeds of toll-fees levied on horse-drawn traffic leaving Minsk, gave its name to *Traeckí pradmiescie* ("Trinity suburb"); in 1605 custodianship of the Church was transferred to the Dominican Order with whom the Zaviša family were linked by patronage. The old parish church of Holy Trinity was destroyed by the fire of 1809, and after the 1831 Uprising the Dominican order suppressed. However, in 1842 services were resumed by the secular clergy in a small wooden chapel (1796) at the nearby cemetery of Golden Hill. The site is said to derive its name from the richly coloured surrounding trees from which, according to the legend, the inhabitants gathered gold to build a new Church. Less poetically the funds derived from a number of generous legacies bequeathed by local parishoners - in particular Symon Leanovič (14.000Rs), Ihnat Laskarievič (5.000Rs) and Antonina Kaminskaja (3.000Rs), - and despite difficult political conditions prevailing at the times, the new Church was successfully completed between 1861-1864.

From a survey of 1908 it was described as "a stone-built church in the Gothic style with 12 windows and a timbered roof, 12.5 *sažans* (a measure of 7 feet or 2.3m.) in length, 4.66 *sažans* in width and about 5 *sažans* in height." The structure is in fact built of stuccoed brickwork consisting of a nave lit by four Gothic lancet windows, two west-front windows of similar style, with two more windows in the chancel. On either side the windows are flanked by pier buttresses crowned with small gables. The west front consists of a façade with a cornice and triangular pediment, broken by a slightly projecting portico and entrance porch surmounted by a blind roundel supporting a two-tiered belfry. The façade is supported by two-tiered angle-buttresses culminating in turret-like pinnacles. Both tiers are corniced, the lower with twin lancet windows and a shallow triangular gable and return, the upper with four lancet appertures and a steeper gable decorated with blind arches, the whole surmounted by a four-sided steeple, ball and cross. The belfry contained a peal of three bells named - in accordance with old usage - *Leanard*, *Stefan* and *Bronislav*, the largest of which weighed 53 *poods* (2.120lbs).

The interior of the church was of timber with pilasters and cornices painted to resemble marble. On the High altar stood a wooden



summer for displays of sculptures and ceramics. In 1993 the gallery organised a historical exhibition to mark the 75th anniversary of the Proclamation of Belarusian Independence on 25th March 1918. The opening ceremony was conducted by the author Vasyl Bykaú, in the presence of the H. Buralkin, President of the Guild of Artists and the popular Belarusian-American singer Dančyk.

Reverting to the main Avenue, turn right toward the Plac Jakuba Kolasa and the **Philharmonia** building at the corner of vul. Čyrvonazornaja. Established in 1937, it was intended to gather under one roof a number of independent musical groups such as the *Academic Symphony Orchestra of Belaruś*, the *State Folk Orchestra*, the *Belarusian State String quartet*, and the *Belarusian Folksong and Dance ensemble*. Since 1945 these have increased in number and now include other famous groups - the Minsk Chamber orchestra, the Ancient music ensemble *Cantabile*, the *Chamber Choir of Belaruś*, the popular "Charoški", "Vierasy" and "Piesniary" folk-ensembles. The Chamber Choir of Belaruś, a young and vigorous group, have been acclaimed on West European tours for their unique performances of Belarusian Church Music. The three-storied Philharmonia building was begun in 1955 and completed in 1963 to a design by H. Beniadziktaú, combining features of classical architecture with modernistic constructivism. There is an entrance portico facing the Avenue with six squared columns partially fluted, schematic capitals, entablature and triangular dentilled pediment. The lateral façade consists of an asymmetrically disposed bow-front with vertical windows on the two lower levels, a crowning cornice and triangular pediment. The interior comprises an entrance foyer on two floors, a mezzanine gallery, decorated with a Tapestry symbolising *Music* by the artists Niamcoú, Tkačoú and Jackin (1976). The Concert hall has 996 seats and is equipped with an organ installed by Bohemian specialists. Smaller premises for Chamber orchestra and Choir are available in the Catholic Church behind the Philharmonia building. The hall was the venue of a Commemorative meeting and concert on 25th March 1993 to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Independence of Belaruś, in the presence of the Speaker of Parliament Stanislau Šuškievič, the last President of the Rada of the Belarusian Republic in exile, Dr. Jazep Sažyc and a number of leading personalities, including Nil Hilievič, Vasyl Bykaú and Zianon Pazniak.

Located in the verdant "backs" behind the *Philharmonia*, the former Cemetery of St. Roch has now been laid out as a garden. The small **Church of the Holy Trinity and St. Roch\*** on Golden Hill is one of the few buildings in Minsk constructed in a traditional Western Gothic style.



In addition to several churches of the Greek-rite, a Roman Catholic church had been built in Minsk during the Middle-ages as a royal foundation of Grand Duke Jahajla (c.1348-1434). Built of wood, it was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and to the Assumption of Our Lady, but it was destroyed by fire in 1409. Another Church was built in the suburb of Plebany in 1460, but little is known of its history. In 1600 a Church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, endowed by Sofia Sluškova *nee* Zaviša out of the proceeds of toll-fees levied on horse-drawn traffic leaving Minsk, gave its name to *Traecky pradmiescie* ("Trinity suburb"); in 1605 custodianship of the Church was transferred to the Dominican Order with whom the Zaviša family were linked by patronage. The old parish church of Holy Trinity was destroyed by the fire of 1809, and after the 1831 Uprising the Dominican order suppressed. However, in 1842 services were resumed by the secular clergy in a small wooden chapel (1796) at the nearby cemetery of Golden Hill. The site is said to derive its name from the richly coloured surrounding trees from which, according to the legend, the inhabitants gathered gold to build a new Church. Less poetically the funds derived from a number of generous legacies bequeathed by local parishoners - in particular Symon Leanovič (14.000Rs), Ihnat Laskarievič (5.000Rs) and Antonina Kaminskaja (3.000Rs), - and despite difficult political conditions prevailing at the times, the new Church was successfully completed between 1861-1864.

From a survey of 1908 it was described as "a stone-built church in the Gothic style with 12 windows and a timbered roof, 12.5 *sažans* (a measure of 7 feet or 2.3m.) in length, 4.66 *sažans* in width and about 5 *sažans* in height." The structure is in fact built of stuccoed brickwork consisting of a nave lit by four Gothic lancet windows, two west-front windows of similar style, with two more windows in the chancel. On either side the windows are flanked by pier buttresses crowned with small gables. The west front consists of a façade with a cornice and triangular pediment, broken by a slightly projecting portico and entrance porch surmounted by a blind roundel supporting a two-tiered belfry. The façade is supported by two-tiered angle-buttresses culminating in turret-like pinnacles. Both tiers are corniced, the lower with twin lancet windows and a shallow triangular gable and return, the upper with four lancet appertures and a steeper gable decorated with blind arches, the whole surmounted by a four-sided steeple, ball and cross. The belfry contained a peal of three bells named - in accordance with old usage - *Leanard*, *Stefan* and *Bronislav*, the largest of which weighed 53 *poods* (2.120lbs).

The interior of the church was of timber with pilasters and cornices painted to resemble marble. On the High altar stood a wooden



right a boy-fiddler plays to the listening country girl Anna, an allusion to his epic poem *Symon Muzyka* ("Simon the Musician"). On his left, the hero of his tale *Triasina*, ("The Quagmire") the historical figure Dzied Talaš, who during the campaigns of intervention in the 1920's, fought in the struggle against the Polish legionaries. Surrounded by apartment blocks in the grand municipal neo-classical style, two central towers on the north-western side form a monumental junction of vul. V. Charužaj with the square, after the style of the intersection of vul. Mahazinaja (*Kirava*) with the neo-Babylonian portals of Plac Pryvaksalny. At the eastern end of the square stands the concave colonnade of stele-like piers forming the main portico of the **Belarusan Institute of Physical Culture**, a stylish building on four and five floors blending neoclassical with functional elements to a design by Brehman and Voinaú. Each of the two lateral wings on the bifurcating Skaryna Avenue and vul. Ja. Kolasa has a asymmetrical facade made up of vertical fenestration in three recessed panels, with similar fenestration flanked between a colonnade of nine narrower plain piers extending upwards to the entablature and roof-level cornice. Founded in 1937, the Institute building was completed in 1939. It includes faculties of pedagogy, team-sports, individual sports and gymnastics. The interior comprises an entry lobby with corridors leading to offices, exercise rooms and gymnasia. On the opposite side of the square a large building houses a popular cafe-restaurant with a staid, neo-rustic decor, named after Ja. Kolas work *Na Rostianach* ("The parting of the ways").

Proceeding eastwards, one of the most striking neo-classical ensembles in Minsk is the main corpus of the **Belarusan Polytechnical Institute\***. Set back from the Avenue in a garden of trees and shrubs, behind an ornamental cast-iron gateway and railings, the main facade is another dignified and felicitous *pastiche* in the grand manner by the architects L. Ryminski and L. Usava (1946-1952). The ground-plan is E-shaped; the central feature is a portico comprising a triangular pediment with a dentilled cornice on six neo-corinthian columns, and a balustrade set on a rusticated base with five large ground-level arched windows. The pediment is decorated with a heraldic motif and a design of beribboned foliation. The central section of the façade has round-arched fenestration on the ground and fourth levels with plain rectangular windows on the second and third levels. In the lateral projecting wings of the front the ground floor windows are round-arched, all other levels have plain rectangular fenestration. The entablature of the cornice is decorated with festoon stucco moulding, and the whole is surmounted by a balustrade. The Institute was founded as the Minsk Polytechnic in



1920, and restructured in its present form in 1933. It comprises faculties of Energetics, Mechanical Technology, Machine Construction, Instrument Construction, Electronics, Architecture, Labour and Labour technology systems, Building Construction, and Road- and Bridge-Building. Opposite the Polytechnic off the Avenue and up vul. P. Broúka lies the *Minsk Radio-Technical Institute*, built in 1967-1972 and now having more than 33 effective professors, 700 lecturers and 9.000 students. Minsk was the birthplace of David Sarnaú (Sarnov) (1891-1971) who became the pioneer of radio-broadcasting in America. As chairman of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Corporation he took over the world-famous Gramophone Company *His Master's Voice*. During World War II as a Brigadier General, Sarnaú became communications advisor to General (later President) Dwight Eisenhower.

Also on the southern side of the Avenue at the intersection with vul. Akademičnaja stands one of the principal architectural and cultural ensembles of the capital - the **Academy of Sciences of Belaruś\*\*\***. The Academy developed on the basis of the "Institute of Belarusan Culture" (*Inbelkult*) which had been established by the Ministry of Education of the Belarusan Soviet Republic, in January 1922, at the end of the interventionist conflicts, to cater for the need for a permanent cultural centre in Minsk. The Institute was in turn the successor of the old *Belaruskaja Chatka* and *Jubilejny Dom* which had begun to coordinate national cultural activities from 1916-1920. The present building was constructed to the general outlines of a winning design by the Smalensk-born architect H. Laúrou (1895-1967) in a competition organised in Minsk in 1931-1932. It was however subsequently modified and improved by the leading Belarusan architect Ja. Langbard (1882-1951), who whilst retaining the original design gave it a more compact and classical appearance. A particular feature of Langbard's improvement was the segmented circular colonnade, which has become the distinctive hallmark of the Academy. Double cylindrical piers disposed in pairs support a narrow flat-roofed entablature to form a cloister-walk linking the two side-wings of Laúrou's original design, and giving a lightness to what might otherwise be an overly dull functional ensemble. Its curvature follows that of the principal façade of the central sector of the Academy with its six shallow recesses between seven plain pilasters with schematic ionian capitals. At ground floor level the three central recesses have three rectangular neo-classical porticos of black marble consisting of an entablature and cornice supported by two plain lateral piers; the other four recesses have ground floor rectangular windows with intersecting vertical and horizontal muntins surmounted by ornamental plas-



terwork festoons in the classical style. At upper level seven similar windows and sills are set between the pilasters, each surmounted by cross lintels and a bas-relief panel depicting aspects of science. The curved central entrance front is linked to the side wings by two narrow corner projections, each with a vertical band of three windows, and also by a ornamental cornice and an entablature decorated with stucco concentric-circled roundels. The lateral wings have four levels of windows disposed vertically in recessed panels between plain pilasters matching those of the entrance front. In the forecourt between the portico and colonnade lies a formal garden.

To the right of the entrance front is a **Plaque to Francisk Skaryna** (c.1485-c.1545), commemorating the quincentenary of the birth of the Belarusan Renaissance scholar, outstanding engraver and translator of the Bible. Minsk historically formed part of the Principality of Polacak on the river Dzvina where Skaryna was born, so the naming after him of the principal thoroughfare of the capital is entirely appropriate. Minsk is the seat of the international *Francis Skaryna Belarusan Language Society*, and the libraries of the city hold a number of rare volumes of his printed works. A graduate from the Universities of Krakow (1506) and Padua (1512), who worked for a time in Prague (1517-1519), he wrote little whilst translating the Bible (the earliest in any East Slavic language), but in the fashion of the day he hinted much, particularly in his superb allegorical engravings. His art has been compared in quality with that of Hans Baldung Gruen and Michael Wohlgemuth of the South German school. He knew Hebrew, Greek and Latin, was skilled in the art of heraldry, knew something of Law, and his *Paschalia* and calendar, published in Vilnia in 1522, show him also to have been well-versed in medecine, botany and astronomy. He was Court physician to Albert Duke of Prussia, and Jan Bishop of Vilnia; he was also appointed Secretary to King Hans of Denmark (1481-1513). He moved in the circles of Erasmus, Martin Luther, Melanchton and Albrecht Duerer; there is evidence that, like the latter, he attended on the Emperor Maximilian I Hapsburg, as well as his own sovereign, Grand Duke Žyhimunt II (*Pol.* I) of Lithuania and Belaruś, at the Congress of Vienna in 1515. He was the author of a number of admirable Byzantine-rite hymns and prayers, as well as of the first known examples of Belarusan verse. In addition to a staunch loyalty to an undivided Christian Church and to the Pope (he appears to have been equally at home with the Latins and the Greeks), and an evangelical dedication to the education of his Belarusan compatriots in every field of science, he seems to have been, like the Christian Cabalists Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522) and Giovanni Pico della



Mirandola (1463-1499) whom he quotes, a seeker after the ancient wisdom of the mystical *Zohar*. He ended his remarkable career in Prague as Gardener Royal to Ferdinand I Hapsburg (1503-1564), King of Bohemia and later Holy Roman Emperor. "Skaryna is without doubt the most outstanding figure in the entire panoply of Belarusan culture" (Prof. A.B. McMillin ).

The entrance to the Academy gives access to a spacious curved trapezoidal foyer with a ceiling supported on six cylindrical piers. A low flight of steps leads to a raised landing from which three narrower flights of steps give access to the corridors and office-rooms of the two side-wings. Numerous congresses and sessions have taken place in the Academy central auditorium, of which some, like the Skaryna *Quincentenary* in 1989, were the subject of papers by scholars from Western Europe, America and many other countries.

The central Academy building was developed and extended over the 1960s and 1970s by the construction of annexes and additional ensembles in an area comprised between vul. Akademičnaja and vul. Surhanava, mostly in a simple functional style. The extensions and additions include the 4-5 storied Institute of Physics and physico-organic chemistry (*arch.* A. Ivanoú), the Institute of Mathematics (*arch.* A. Vainoú ), the Institute of General non-organic Chemistry (*arch.* H. Beniadziktaú), the Photobiological and Zoological Departments of the Institute of Physics (*arch.* A. Vainoú ) and the Central Jakub Kolas Science Library (*arch.* E. Holdštajn).

Among the original founders of the Academy were the leading poets Janka Kupala and Jakub Kolas, the writer Ciška Hartny, and the literary critics I. Zamocin and I. Piatrovič. With the end of Stalinist repression, the institution flourished, and by 1983 it numbered 57 academicians, 73 corresponding members and a staff of 16.000, including 230 doctors and approximately 1.800 candidates in sciences. It is divided into five sections having a total of 29 Institutes, in particular the Kupala Institute of Literature, the Kolas Institute of Linguistics and the Institute of Art, Ethnography and Folklore, the latter of which has produced an impressive collection of more than 40 volumes of national folklore material. In addition, the Academy produces its own Journal *Viesci Akademii Navuk Belarusi* ("Journal of the Academy of Sciences of Belaruś") in seven sections. The *Academy of Sciences Choir* (dir. Tamara Slabodčykova) has pioneered the revival of Belarusan classical and religious music in a series of concerts to commemorate various historical occasions. Sixteenth and seventeenth century chorales from the monasteries of Supraśl, Žyrovicy and Vilnia form part of their repertoire, to-



gether with neglected anthems and lyrics by M. Ancaú (1869-1945), A. Turankoú (1885-1958), M. Ravienski (1886-1953), A. Valynčyk (1896-1985), M. Kulikovič-Ščahloú (1897-1969) and E. Zubkovič.

Perhaps the most attractive of the Academy Institutes for the visitor to Minsk is the Institute of Arts, Ethnography and Folklore with its **Museum of ancient Belarusan Culture\*\*\***, established in 1979, in an annexe building off the vul. Akademičnaja. Together with the archeological digs to rediscover the city's past history, and the restoration work carried out in Trinity suburb, the opening of this Museum played an important part in the re-awakening of national consciousness among a people who were seeking to rediscover their identity. The work of restoring and displaying the exhibits is a daunting one - many of the exhibits have been rescued from neglect, if not destruction, often from vandalised churches and manor houses, and it will be many years before they can be satisfactorily made accessible to the public. The collection covers four main areas - archeology, ethnography and folk art, popular musical instruments and Belarusan iconography. The most striking items are the folk-textiles and costumes, more particularly the superb brocade girdles (*pajasy*) from the Radzivil factory in Slucak, which constituted the most original article of aristocratic dress in the former Grand Duchy, and the fine examples of folk-ceramics, in particular the polished black pottery from the Horadnia and Navahradak regions, and the attractive mottled patterns on ceramics from the Kleck area of Minsk province.

The gathering together of icons of the Belarusan school has cast valuable light on Byzantine influences in the Baltic regions of which much of Belaruś forms part. Many icons from abandoned churches in the Čarnobyl and Homiel districts have been deposited with the museum for safe keeping. By theme, coloration and graphics Belarusan iconography forms a distinctive tradition. Subject matter often originates in 16th and 17th century woodcuts, and human faces are more realistically drawn than in the more widely known Russian schools. Reds, whites and blues, often pastel-shaded, predominate as colours, and there is a predelection for ornate golden brocade-like backgrounds. The otherwise abstract spirituality of the icon is here tempered by traits connecting the divine with the natural, every-day world - meadow-flowers, folk-embroidery, 17th century costumes, saints with Napoleonic haircuts and angels sitting at tables laid out with knives, forks and fresh fruit. Particularly striking is an angelic Holy Trinity with an ornate silver background from the Bieriascie region, in which the trinal fruits and flowers on the table take up the cosmic theme, dear to the heart of the Renaissance mystics such as *Francis Skaryna*, of nature as the vest-



ment of God. Other outstanding exhibits include a magnificent carved head of an *Apostle* (Horadnia, 18th c.) and a Church Bell (Bierascie 1583), with a heraldic escutcheon and a rare inscription in the Belarusan language transcribed into the Latin alphabet.

Nearby, officially in Skaryna Avenue, but in fact located in a pleasant garden at the rear of the Academy of Sciences (no. 66a.), is the villa occupied by the leading poet of his time *Jakub Kolas*, born Kanstancyn Mickievič (1882-1956). After attending the Niasviž Teacher's Training College, he became a schoolmaster in the Pinsk region, and began to contribute to the Belarusan Literary journal *Naša Niva* (1907). In 1908 however he was imprisoned for 3 years in the Minsk Piščali Fortress for his clandestine anti-Tsarist activities. His claim to literary fame rests principally on his two epic poems *Novaja Ziamlia* ("New Land") and *Symon Muzyka* ("Simon the Musician"), both started in 1911 and completed in 1923 and 1925 respectively. He also left a number of prose works, including the largely autobiographical trilogy *Na rostianiach* ("At the parting of the ways"). He came under increasing censorship and repression under Stalin, and in many of his works he was compelled to strike a political stance. He was an active member of the Institute for Belarusan Culture, of which he later became vice President. The villa he occupied during the last four years of his life now houses the **Kolas Literary Museum** \*. Of simple rectangular form with a porticoed façade, the entrance consists of a balconied porch raised on a pair of twin columns, a central upper window and a segmented pediment. The villa comprises an entrance vestibule, hall and staircase with access to ten rooms, in which some of the museum's 18.900 exhibits are displayed. These illustrate aspects of the poets life before and after the events of 1917-1918, the place of Kolas in his present-day context, and the pattern of the poets working activity. Of particular interest is the material relating to Kolas' place in the world, both as a major literary figure the centenary of whose birth was commemorated by UNESCO in 1982, and through translations of his works into different languages. Much of the material (letters, poems, photographs) is exhibited on the ground-floor, where there is also a lecture room. Access to the upper floor is obtained by a staircase, the window of which is decorated with stained glass by V. Pozniak, where the poet's day to day living quarters were located - a dining room in the *bourgeois* style and an elegant *salon* \* complete with baby-grand piano and 18th century marqueterie antiques from Riga.

How much the poet relished these refinements is an open question, in the light of his nostalgic evocation of country cottage life in his native Akinčycy: "By the orchard, in the farmyard, / There a lean-to and a



barn stood. / Under the lean-to were gathered / Tools and harness, cart and waggon, / Wheels and axles, old sledge-runners, / Skeps for bees - quite few in number - / Still unfinished, sundry vessels, / Old tubs, a half-bushel measure / And all kinds of trash and lumber... / Within the court-yard, the house loomed there / Looking smart and nicely groomed there / Beside the rest, ramshackle, faded, / Like a yeoman-farmer's maiden, / On feast-days, by the Catholic chapel, / Holding up her skirts a little, / With her umbrella walking grandly..." (*Novaja ziamlia*, trans. Vera Rich).

At the corner of vul. Akademičnaja is an attractively designed *art deco* **District Clinic\***, built in 1929-1931 by the leading Belarusan architect of the period, Ju. Laúrou (1896-1967), consisting of a rectangular flat-roofed building on three floors, with interesting cigar-shaped fenestration on the upper-floor. It is linked to a curious segmented rotunda with a vertical mullioned window over the cantilever porch and an upper-level with large porthole windows. The interior is simple and functional in the style of the period.

Reverting to the Avenue, opposite Langbard's entrance to the Academy of Sciences on the north side stands the massive cine-theatre *Kastryčnik* ("October") (no. 73) on two levels, the upper taking the form of a flat cylindrical block of fluted concrete. The lower ticket-office vestibule gives access to a cinema auditorium of 1400 seats as well as to a "video-cafe" with 200 seats and an agreeably appointed sandwich- and wine-bar. Further up the avenue, at the intersection with vul. Bohdana Chmielnickaha, is the well-known *Batlejka* \* ("The Christmas Puppet show") coffee house with its cafe-society decor of art-deco stained glass windows, and attractive porcelain wall decorations by the ceramic artists M. Bajrač and V. Pryjeskin, depicting a variety of traditional Christmas puppet theatres.

Following Skaryna Avenue further eastwards, the visitor shortly arrives at Plac Kalinina, another spacious square with a garden surrounded on three sides by apartment blocks of red brick, and opening onto the main entrance to the **Central Botanical Gardens\*\***. This consists of a colonnade of Ionian pillars supporting a semi-circular entablature erected in 1958 to a design by S. Musinski, beyond which a fine avenue of Manchurian walnut trees, leads to a central parterre of box-bordered lawns and flower-beds, from which magnificent **Avenues of trees** \* radiate spoke-like in every direction. Each avenue consists of a single genus, so that progressing clockwise from the avenue of walnut trees the visitor has a choice of common oak, bird cherries, Pennsylvanian ash-trees, common fir, linden trees, coniferous *thuja*, birch-trees



and maple. The contrasting colour scheme of the plantation foliage ensures that the walks can best be enjoyed in early spring and more particularly in the fall, when the Gardens become a riot of autumnal hues. There is in addition a landscaped English garden, a wild-grass garden, and a *dendrarium*; the avenue of firs leads to an attractive lake with an island swannery. About the gardens are a variety of displays of flora from the Far East, the North American continent, Europe and Siberia, the Black Sea and the Caucasus, Central Asia and Belarús. The Botanical Gardens were established in 1932 and now form part of the Academy of Sciences; the relatively mild climate of Belarús ensures that a wide variety of temperate zone trees and shrubs can be displayed here in satisfactory conditions.

Adjacent to, though not forming part of the Botanical Gardens is **Čeluskin Park**, a recreational area laid out in 1928-1932 at the edge of a pine-forest and which by 1975 comprised some 78 hectares. In 1934 it was named after a Russian Arctic explorer then in vogue. It is bounded on the west by the botanical Gardens, to the east and south by vul. Makaenka, and to the north by Skaryna Avenue. Its principal feature is its fine plantations of mixed evergreen and deciduous trees - horse chestnut, birch, fir, Manchurian walnut, oak, linden, maple and rowan. The park is traversed by an escarbuncle of intersecting avenues of trees, and is furnished with a variety of attractions, including a dance hall, a cinema, pavillions and a sportsground. A particular draw for children is the **Miniature railway** \* running from the vicinity of the popular *Svitiaz Cafe* on the Avenue, through the Park and across the Slapianski canal.

From the Park there is access to vul. Parnikovaja and the **Vankovič Mansion**\*, a fine "Empire"-style residence on two floors dating from the early 19th century, formerly owned by the Belarusan painter *Valencij Vankovič* (1799-1842), whose family town house was located in vul. Valockaja near the river Svislač. The T-shaped building has a regular classical façade with an asymmetrically placed entrance in a projecting portico section, the central part of which comprises three rectangular windows between four plain pilasters and capitals, but performing no function in sustaining the massive roof level cornice and parapet, surmounted by a diminutive rectangular pediment. The spacious rooms of the interior have been substantially altered, although fragments of the original mosaics and ceiling-cornices subsist.

The mansion was the principal country residence of the artist, after he had completed his studies at the prestigious Jesuit Academy in Polacak, the University of Vilnia and the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg (1818-1824). The Vankovičy were an old Belarusan aris-



ocratic family of the heraldic clan of *Lis*, descended from a Prince Vanko in the entourage of the Grand Duke Kejstut (d. 1382), having a long connection and tradition of public service in the law-courts of the Navahradak and Minsk Vajavodships. In the 17th century a Piotr Vankovič was an Armiger (*vojski*) of Minsk, Uladislau Vankovič was Sword-bearer (*miečnik*) of the city; in the 18th century Tamaš Vankovič became *česnik* (Sergeant) of Minsk; in 1778 Maciej Vankovič was appointed *sud ziemski* (Land Commissioner) of Minsk, and in 1788 Jazep Vankovič became *pisar* (Keeper of the Municipal Rolls). Valency Vankovič is chiefly remembered for his romantic portraits (including a likeness of the great poet Adam Mickievič [1798-1855] of Belarusan descent, who wrote his masterpiece *Pan Tadeusz* in Polish) and landscapes, some of which have been preserved in Belarusan art galleries. The mansion was also the birthplace of the artists son, Jan Vankovič (1838-1899), who became a forester in Bielavieža and after 1861 joined up with Kastuś Kalinoŭski in the Horadnia region. He formed a flying column of insurgents in Bierascie and participated with R. Traugutt's Kobrin column in anti-Tsarist raids in the Pinsk area. In 1863 he was able to escape to Austria and died in exile. Stories of the hunting down of insurgents after the Kalinoŭski Uprising were commonly related in many Belarusan families until recent times - of how such and such a relative had to hide in a barrel of pickled sauerkraut or pork to escape discovery by the Russian troops.

The **Eastern Cemetery\*** commenced in the 1950's lies off the *Maskoŭskaja Šosa* (Moscow Chaussee) and is a historic place in its own right. Politicians, artists, writers and soldiers interred here, often with elaborate memorials by leading Belarusan sculptors. Among the eminent buried in this graveyard are the composer M. Aladaŭ (1890-1972)[sculpt. *Z. Azhur*]; the great *prima donna* Larysa Alexandroŭskaja (1904-1980); the socialist-romantic painters I. Achremčyk (1903-1971)[*Z. Azhur*]; the Bolshevik poets P. Broŭka (1905-1980)[*S. Vakar*], and A. Bialievič (1914-1978)[*Z. Azhur*] whose poems "Upeŭnienaśc" and "Ja vieru znoŭ" inspired two of M. Kulikovič's finest songs; the Smalensk-born sculptor A. Hlebaŭ (1908-1968) [*Z. Azhur*], the outstanding cymbalist player Ja. Žynovič (1907-1974)[*Z. Azhur*]; the popular historical novelist Ūl. Karatkievič (1930-1984); the politician K. Kisialoŭ (1903-1977), who as representative for Belaruś signed the United Nations Charter at San Francisco in 1946; the botanist Academician V. Kuprevič (1897-1969)[*Z. Azhur*]; the poetess E. Los (1929-1977)[*A. Zasnicki*]; the dramatist A. Makajonak (1920-1982)[*A. Šaternik*]; the Bolshevik activist P. Mašerava (1918-1980)[*A. Anikejčyk*]; the Minsk-born actress L.



Ržeckaja (1899-1977); the sculptor S. Selichanaú (1917-1976); the Babrujsk-born pianist S. Talkačou (1907-1970); the composer and ethnographer M. Čurkin (1869-1964); the historian M. Tkačou (1942-1992); and the choirleader, ethnographer and folksong collector R. Šyrma (1892-1978)[*I. Misko* ].

The role played by the Minsk author Úł. Karatkievič in spreading through his works an interest and a love for the past history and heritage of Belaruś, attracted a number of radical pilgrims to his graveside in the years preceding the overthrow of the Bolshevik establishment. A proposed protest rally at the Eastern cemetery to mark the Folk festival of *Dziady* on 30th October 1988 was declared illegal, and there were rumours of tanks and armed police with orders to shoot. The rally took place notwithstanding a numerous police presence, and intervention with gas sprays, arrests and beatings up of demonstrators. The march was then led by the populist leader Zianon Pazniak across the Minsk Ring-road to the near-by **Kuropaty**\* forest sector of the *Zialony luh* ("Green Watermeadow") Park, the notorious, recently discovered ethnic killing fields. Here an estimated 102.000 Belarusian intellectuals and ordinary citizens had been systematically shot by Bolshevik death-squads and buried in mass graves between 1937-1941 in the Minsk area alone. The archeologist Pazniak, whose researches and excavations had brought this Belarusian holocaust to light, then addressed the rally and those present all knelt in memory of the murdered victims. A high wooden cross bearing a carved inscription of the dates, and a central circular crown of barbed wire, was subsequently installed to mark the place of the killings.

The nearby Metro station for *Čeluskin Park* brings the visitor back to the city centre. From Kurapaty the *Moscow* and *Uschod* stations are more convenient.



## Traeckaje Pradmiescie to Kamaroúski Market \*\*\* - (Walkabout No. 6).

*The Niamiha Bridge - The former Ascension monastery - The Basilian Holy Trinity Convent - Traeckaje Pradmiescie\*\* (Trinity Suburb)- Dom Pryrodi - vul. Stara-Vilenskaja - A perambulation through Trinity Suburb - The Bahdanovič Museum - The old Apothecary's shop\* - vul. Maxima Bahdanoviča - the Bahdanovič Park and statue - The National Opera and Ballet \*\* - The Lekkert Brewery - The Staražeuski Gate - Russian Church of St. Mary Magdalene - The old Seminary and Military Academy \* - Lee Harvey Oswald in Minsk - The Kamaroúski market.*

The single span of the so-called Chlusaú bridge links the old lower town to the left bank of the river and the city's miniature "Latin Quarter" - the **Trinity suburb** (*Traeckí pradmiescie*), the heart of which lies between vul. Staravilenskaja and vul. M. Bahdanoviča, together with the **National Opera\*\***. The area is particularly associated with writers and artists, and more especially with the genial lyrical poet of the *Naša Niva* era Maxim Bahdanovič, whose graceful lyrics and tragic death at



*Traeckaje Pradmiescie (Old Town).*



an early age evoke the fate of the English Romantic poet John Keats. From the bridge the road to the north-east ascends Trinity hill and served as the main thoroughfare of the small left-bank settlement, which in the 15th century was protected by a timbered stockade.

There were a number of Greek-rite churches and convents in the suburb - St. Nicholas, St. Michael's, but principally the *Monastery of the Ascension*, one of the most ancient in all Belaruś. The Grand Duchess Helen (d.1513), spouse of Alexander Jahajlavič (1461-1506) and daughter of the scheming Grand Duke Ivan III of Muscovy, is reputed to have visited and prayed at the old Greek-rite Church of the Ascension on her way to Vilnia. It was largely through the influence of her Muscovite chaplains that the Archimandrite Jonas of that monastery, a strict but simple man, was in 1502 appointed the first non-Uniate Metropolitan of Kiev since the Ecumenical Council of Florence (1439). By the mid-16th century the monastery had declined as a result of the desertion of the Greek-rite nobility to Calvinism. At the death of Archimandrite Pafnucyi there were no monks left in the convent to take his place. According to Syrakomla, the Grand Duke Žyhimunt III (*Pol.* II), mindful of the ancient prestige of the monastery, then leased it to a



*Opera and Ballet Theatre.*



nobleman Jan Bać (Pać?), who neglected and demolished the conventual buildings, and for some years thereafter failed even to provide for a priest to celebrate the liturgy in the church. In 1576, however, Michael Rahoza, a protagonist of Union with Rome, was appointed Archimandrite of the Minsk convent, where he remained until his consecration as Metropolitan of Kiev in 1588 by the visiting Patriarch Jeremiah of Constantinople. He was to become the guiding force in the movement towards the Union of Bierascie in 1596. Later in 1620 the old timber-frame church of the Ascension was replaced by a brick-built Church, which became the focal point of the suburb, but which is no longer extant. It was indeed the subject of some bitterness among the Greek-rite Christians attached to Constantinople, that the Tatars of Minsk were permitted to build a mosque on land belonging to their erstwhile Convent, whilst they remained without a place of worship.

The fortifications of the left-bank suburb were in the mid-1500s strengthened by earthworks and the Holy Trinity redoubt: and from the end of the 16th century until 1935 a market was held near the gates on the crest of Trinity hill. By the late 19th century the jumble of old houses had deteriorated, but it was not until the 1970s that a plan for its excavation and restoration was put in hand. It was one of several projects which caught the fancy of the public, and many young people volunteered to assist with the digs and reconstruction work between 1980-1985, directed by the archeologists V. Sobal, A. Trusaú and Zianon Pazniak. Among the artefacts discovered were fragments of tiles and ceramics originating from the Rhineland, with which Minsk appears to have enjoyed extensive trading. In April 1986 there was an ugly incident in the area during which a number of members of the unofficial youth organisation *Talaka* interested in the excavations were set upon and brutally assaulted in characteristic style by burly "Afghan Veterans".

After crossing the bridge, to the right just off the vul. Bahdanoviča, stands the oldest surviving building in Trinity suburb, the Basilian **Holy Trinity monastery** \*. Built near the 15th century wooden church of that name, the convent was founded in 1630, and was also built of timber. During the Northern Wars it was looted in 1707 by Peter the Great's troopers, who smashed the altar and pulled up the floor looking for gold. In 1799 it was rebuilt of brick and stucco to a design by the then leading Minsk architect T. Kramer. It was destroyed by fire in 1809, but rebuilt on two floors with a central façade, triangular pediment and two lateral wings. The interior had arched corridors, some decorated with frescoes, now destroyed. In 1840, after the suppression of the Order the convent



buildings were converted into a hospital, and a third floor was added to the ensemble. The former Almshouses and an 18th century residence have also been altered and rebuilt.

The centre of Trinity suburb is the quadrilateral comprised between the communal embankment, vul. Staravilenskaja, vul. J. Kupaly (*Traeckaja* and vul. Bahdanoviča. Within lies a pleasing warren of little lanes, steps and leafy squares with balconied courtyards, which realistically also include a few modern but sympathetically designed commercial and residential houses. The most attractive **views\*** of the ensemble are from Victory Park across the Svislač, and along the river from vul. Staražeúskaja, with the contrasting coloured stucco 18th and early 19th century buildings reflected in the water, against the backdrop of white towers and tiled church roofs of the Upper town.

A tour of the old quarter is best commenced at the eastern end of the Chlusaú bridge (Metro: *Niamiha*). The corner-site of the **Kamunalnaja Nabiarežnaja\*** (Communal Embankment) and vul. *Bahdanoviča* is occupied by a substantial shop originally dealing in fine *Nioman* crystal and porcelaine, but now a general store. Turn left along the Embankment to view a picturesque group of four early 19th century **Merchant houses\*** built of stucco and painted in contrasting shades of pastel orange, green, cream and brick red. A typical early 19th century long-fronted town house (no.4a), with an ornamented entrance portico and pitched red-tiled roof with three lunette lucarne windows, rises on two floors with an intermediate cornice. A short flight of steps leads to the centrally placed entrance with a side door and five windows with shutters. The upper floor has seven rectangular windows with plain moulded, rectangular surrounds of white stucco. The most impressive building of the group is a **Burgher house\*** (no. 6b) of the same period set back in a recessed courtyard, with a facade of three storeys and intermediate cornices. A central slightly projecting portico section comprises an asymmetrically placed entrance door approached by a flight of steps, a first floor with two french-windows opening on a balcony with ornamental wrought ironwork and a second floor with two windows topped by an entablature, cornice and classical triangular pediment with a lunette-shaped lucarne window. Each of the two lateral sections comprises fenestration of three rectangular windows framed by plain moulded surrounds on three levels with intermediate horizontal cornices; the steeply pitched roof is red-tiled. The building serves as the headquarters of the Belarusian Restaurant Association (*Belrestauracyja*). A third house (no. 6a) of similar date and style on two floors with a pitched, tiled roof and attic, faces onto an inner walled courtyard and endwise



with a triangular gable onto the Embankment. An outside flight of stairs leads up to the first floor with its popular old-style *Coffee shop*. On the opposite side of the court-yard, an L-shaped period house (no. 6) of simple classical design on two floors with regular fenestration, houses a traditional *Karčma* (wine and snack bar) - the *Staravilenskaja* ("Old Vilnia"), where the customers themselves occasionally provide the music. An alley-way leads from the main courtyard to the picturesque "backs".

The near-by **river-front \*** is a popular venue for artists, as well as for vendors of craft-ware, and miscellaneous hawkers and pedlars. Reverting to the Embankment, follow the river-walk round to the restored vul. *Staravilenskaja*, passing the rear of the "Staravilenskaja" tavern, another classical T-shaped two-storeyed building (no. 4) with pitched roof, lunette lucarne windows and intermediate and roof-level cornices presenting a long front onto the river-walk. An asymmetrically placed entrance porch is flanked by two and four plain rectangular windows on street level. On the upper level both the facade and side-front have seven windows with moulded surrounds and lintels in white stucco. The premises house a lower bar and comfortable first-floor restaurant with fine views over the Svislač. A more substantial three-level house (no. 6), with attic and a central *oeil de boeuf* lucarne in the gable, has three tiers of windows with variously moulded frames. A suite of residential houses have interesting period façades and constitute a picturesque ensemble (no. 8, 12, 14\* and 16); the most important of the group (no. 14) includes more than six façades, and interesting "backs" - rear courtyards, with wrought iron and wooden galleries and outside stairs - which are worth exploring.

Access to the **Inner court-yards\*\*** is best obtained by following a route through the passage between nos. 6 and 8 of vul. *Staravilenskaja* and straight through the gardens and up steps past a number of picturesque period annexes to houses in the vul. *Bahdanoviča*. On an island site in the centre of the "backs" are three buildings housing from east to west the Maxim Bahdanovič Museum (No. 7a), the *Dom Pryrody* ("Wild-life House") (no. 9a) and a pleasantly-sited, spacious *Cafe*, with a beer-tavern on the lower level. The **Bahdanovič Museum\*** contains exhibits illustrating the life and work of the genial young poet Maxim (1891-1917) of that name, the son of the eminent ethnographer and teacher, Adam Bahdanovič (1862-1940). Maxim was born in Minsk, but spent much of his youth in Russia. In 1907 he contributed his first work to the literary journal *Naša Niva*, and the first collection of his poems *Vianok* (sponsored by Princess Mahdalena Radzivil whose heraldic emblem -



the swan [*Zavyša*] - appears on the title-page), was published in 1913. He was also the author of a number of prose and dramatic works. His poems are remembered for their delicate, descriptive lyricism and the sophistication of his verse-forms - sonnets, triolets, rondeaux, *terza* and *ottava rima*.

The adjacent **Dom Pryroda** ("Wildlife House") houses a fine collection of natural history exhibits, with specimens of Belarusian flora and fauna. Emerging between the former "Nioman" porcelain and crystal store and a red-brick house (no. 7) at the western end of vul. Bahdanoviča, turn left along that street where a terrace of early and mid-19th century brick and stucco fronted shops, cafes (nos. 13 and 15) and private houses are worth viewing (nos. 7, 9\*, 11, 13, 15 and 17). Return to the inner courts opposite the central *Cafe* by way of the passage between the houses at nos. 9 and 11. Follow this in an easterly direction, turning left at the small refreshments bar to emerge through a passage once again onto vul. Staravilenskaja, next to a corner-site terrace of picturesque period dwelling-houses (no. 16) with views across the Svislač. At the corner, turn right into vul. Janka Kupaly (*Traeckaja*) on the eastern side of the restored suburb, where two further period apartment blocks (nos. 3 and 5) complete the historic ensemble. The second contains an interesting old **Apothecary's shop\*** with a display of books and antique chemical glassware. The earliest recorded chemist's shop in Minsk dates from 1659. On the corner of vul. Bahdanoviča are two fine 19th century house, the first (no. 19) a typical Minsk long-fronted apartment house with two dormer windows, the second an attractive three-storied *Burgher house* \* (no. 21) with a covered porch in a symmetrical façade. In addition to the usual seven lower level windows, the second level has two French-windows opening onto wrought iron balconies. A narrow central portico is flanked by two flat pilasters, culminating in a roof-level pitched gable, with an *oeil de boeuf* lucarne set in an arch.

Across the street to the east in front of the Opera-house lies the *Bahdanovič Park* located near the site of the poet's birthplace. In the centre is the bronze Maxim Bahdanovič Statue on a red granite base by the eminent Vorša-born sculptor S. Vakar (b. 1928). The monument, 4.6 metres in height, was erected in 1981 to mark the 90th anniversary of the poet's birth. His figure in a tunic shirt and greatcoat, stands with arms crossed, nonchalantly holding a small bouquet of cornflowers, the national flower of Belarus, which evoke one of his best-remembered poems, "The weaver-women of Slucak" (*Sluckija tkačychi* [1912]). The toiling girls' thoughts wander as they make the traditional noblemens'



gold-brocaded *pajasy* (girdles) to florid, oriental designs: "There by the rye, in the bright distance, / The cornflowers shine with azure still, / And waves of chilly silver glisten / Where rivers gush between the hills; / Edge of an oakwood, dark in verdure... / And hands, forgetful at the loom, / Neglecting the designs of Persia, / Weave in the native cornflower bloom." (*transl.* Vera Rich ). The statue is set against the background of trees and a striking architectural ensemble, the national Opera house in vul. Paškieviča.

The figure of Bahdanovič as the poet of the revival of national consciousness in the historic past of Belaruś achieved particular significance in the campaign for independence. His statue became a focal point in a series of protest demonstrations against the Bolshevik regime in the years leading up to the national Revolution of 1991. On the 1st May 1989 the leader of the Belarusian Popular Front Zianon Pazniak addressed an enthusiastic rally, bearing the then prohibited national white-red-white flag and banners of the emblem of the White knight - *Pahonia*, singing the words of Bahdanovič's well-known poem of that name to an adaptation of the French Revolutionary anthem - the *Marseillaise* (1789).

The **Belarusian National Theatre, Opera and Ballet \*\*** is one of the major buildings of Minsk constructed during the period of Soviet rule in 1935-1937 to a design by the leading architect Ja. Langbard. Founded to accommodate the *Belarusian Studio for Opera and Ballet* (1930) and officially opened in 1939, it was restructured and restored in the post-war period (1944-1948); the interior was refurbished in 1977-1981. The exterior was conceived in the form of a hemicycle of rectangular piers and entablatures with vertical windows, on three step-back levels, with flights of stairs leading to a massive central and two lateral entrance porticos, the lower levels make an interesting and forceful blend of neo-classical and constructivist styles. The third level with its bunched, narrow piers, cornices and stubby turrets seems to lack contrast, and gives to the whole an unfortunately cluttered appearance. Langbard himself is said to have been dissatisfied with the overall effect. The eastern front presents a façade recessed between two lateral wings containing rehearsal rooms, rest-rooms, ballet class-rooms, studios, conference-rooms and offices, together with the main body of the stage, wings and coulisses, and a restaurant. The main entrance on the west front consists of a rectangular portico on six piers supporting a plain entablature and cornice, with two lateral side entrances with two-piered porches. Despite its shortcomings, the exterior of the National Theatre and Opera is a period piece of *art deco* design in the grand



manner, contrasting with Husieú's elegant neo-baroque of the adjacent vul. Špitalnaja and the high-rise towers of the Parkavy Mahistral (*Mašerava*) across the Svislač.

The semi-circular ground-floor and impressive first-floor foyers are lavishly appointed with marble-clad walls, flights of steps and floors, moulded panels and festoons, bronze and crystal chandeliers. There is a finely sculptured ornamental portal by A. Bembel and a number of tapestries depicting scenes from the history and culture of Belaruś. The main auditorium contains 1.200 seats disposed as stalls, and three of tiers of dress-circle, upper-circle and balcony with additional boxes; the stage is one of the most spacious in Europe. Numerous Belarusian artists and singers have performed in the National Theatre and Opera - the legendary *diva* Larysa Alexandrouskaja (1904-1980), S. Daniliuk, A. Saúčanka, V. Skarabahataú, M. Halkouški to name but a few. The internationally famous Belarusian *corps de ballet* has been rated as second only to that of St-Petersburg.

At the corner of vul. Paškievič and vul. Bahdanoviča the former cafe *Teatralnaja* was a favourite venue for radical intellectuals in the years leading up to 1989 and the campaign for independence. It now specialises in exotic Asian cuisine. Turning right into vul. Bahdanoviča a substantial four-storied building (no.29) stands on the site of the former *Ecclesiastical seminary* built in the 19th century by the architect A. Melnikaú, in a dignified neo-classical style, not dissimilar to the present reconstruction by the Minsk-born H. Zaborski (1953). Founded in 1793 in the year of the Russian occupation of Minsk, it became after 1840 the seat of the Orthodox seminary transferred from Slucak. During 1905 the seminarians joined the anti-Tsarist revolt, wrecking the class-rooms, destroying the records and setting fire to the rector's and inspector's quarters. The army was obliged to intervene to restore order, and as a result 83 seminarians were expelled from the establishment. Since the Bolshevik revolution the building has housed the **Minsk Military Academy**\*. The main façade consists of a shallow projected central portico with a main entrance surmounted by a dentil-ornamented cornice and triangular pediment. Two symmetrically disposed wings also have roof-level triangular dentilled pediments. The building stands on a horizontal base, with an intermediate cornice between the second and third floors, and a crowning cornice with a parapet supporting corner pinnacles on the wing pediments and two statues by V. Papou (1923-1981) on the central pediments. The outer wall of the two lower floors are ornamented with rustication and a row of single rectangular windows; on the two upper floors the windows are disposed in pairs. Under Soviet



rule the academy was directed by the Russian Civil War veterans A. Fabricius (1922-1923) and Ja. Aliochin (1933-1938); among passing out *alumni* during this period were Marshal I. Jakuboŭski and General Pienkoŭski.

A memorial plaque on a modern dwelling house (no. 25) marks the location of the building, now demolished, in which the poet Bahdanovič was born in 1891. Nearby, according to the national paper *Zvon* ("The Bell") published in Minsk in 1919, a Belarusian Lycee for boys and girls was opened at 32 vul. Bahdanoviča in September of that year, with fees fixed at 300 roubles a head.

Further along vul. Bahdanoviča, at the intersection with vul. Staražeŭskaja ( *Kisialova* ) stand the mid-19th century buildings of what in 1894 became the famous "Bohemia" **Brewery\*** (no. 39) under licence to Count K. Čapski, the scion of an old Baltic noble family with estates at Stankava near Minsk. In 1896 it passed into the hands of the Leckert family, and by 1900 the brewery was employing some 33 workers with an annual turnover of 119.000Rs. It enlarged its premises in 1913, employing 75 workers; further extensions were added in 1923-1925 and 1967-1968. The brewery now comprises three buildings of asymmetrical appearance and out-buildings with a red-brick tall chimney. The oldest part raised on two levels with a pitched roof dates from 1873, and the façade of the most substantial building on three floors has a pattern of plain segmentally arched fenestration between plain pilasters and cornices. Its beer enjoyed an excellent reputation, and in 1894 it won a commendatory award at an Imperial Russian industrial exhibition at Nižny Novgorod; it was commonly marketed in Vilnia, Belastok, Horadnia, Bierascie and Babrujsk. Traditional Belarusian beers were not for the weak of head: certain brands at 12% of alcohol matched the strength of a robust Spanish *Rioja* wine. An Imperial decree of 1914 subsequently limited its strength to 4%. Renamed "Belaruś", the Leckert brewery continues in business on the basis of a century of solid achievement.

A leading light of the musical renaissance in Belaruś, the composer and folklorist Mikola Čurkin (1869-1964) occupied an apartment in a block (no. 3) in vul. Staražoŭskaja. A pupil of M. Ippolitov-Ivanov - himself a lover of Belarusian folk music - from 1905-1914 he directed choirs in Vilnia and Kaunas. He later taught music in Mahiloŭ and Minsk. He was the author of 3 sinfoniettas, 8 suites, 11 string quartets, numerous songs, chorales and romances. He was, with Ravienski, one of the most active collectors of Belarusian folkmusic; his first arrangements of folk songs were published by the ethnographer E. Ramanaŭ in



his *Belaruski Zbornik* (1910). The building bears a plaque commemorating his residence there.

Located by the Cemetery are the picturesque ensemble of the **Starაჰouúski Gate** and the *St. Mary Magdalene Russian Church*. The Gate was constructed in 1847 in a restrained pseudo-Russian style, as a portico with a central arch flanked by two pairs of plain pilasters with vertical recessed panels on either side. Symmetrically placed window-arch appertures surmounted by plain recessed roundels are placed between the outer pilasters and the whole is topped by an entablature, cornice and parapet. A pediment over the central arch and pilasters consists of two ribbed colonnettes with lateral scrolled buttresses, surmounted by an ogee arch, rounded turret and small onion-dome.

The **St. Mary Magdalene Russian Church** \* was erected as a chapel during the period of Tsarist rule (1796-1918) to service a cemetery established on the site in 1820. Built of stone in 1847 in the classical style with a columned portico, entablature and pediment, and a central dome, it was converted to secular use as a deposit for cinematic archives after the Bolshevik seizure of power. It was reconstructed in the 1950's and the colonnaded Portico demolished. The iconostasis was said to have been the work of H. Vjer. The building has now been restored to its original use as a Russian Orthodox Church, with a gilt onion dome and other distinctive appurtenances. Essentially classical in style, the *Church* and the *Starაჰeúski Gate* with its wrought iron railings add a picturesque and exotic touch to a commercial part of Minsk. Nearby, in the vul. Kropotkina is the only remaining Jewish **Synagogue**, or more precisely Prayer-house, in the capital, with the adjacent tower-block Hotel Belaruú overlooking the river Svislač and the high-rise buildings in the Parkavy Mahistral. Apart from its varied restaurants, cafes and hard currency facilities, the **Hotel Belaruú**\* temporarily houses a number of foreign diplomatic embassies and missions accredited to the Government of the newly independent Republic.

Reverting to the vul. Bahdanoviča, continue in a north easterly direction passing the Bielaja Vieჰa cafe, and two noted department stores, - the *Univermah Zviazda* (at the corner of vul. Charuჰej), and the *Zrabi sam* (do-it-yourself) store (no.54). Turn right down vul. Viera Charuჰej to its intersection with vul. Kujbyჰeva and its macabre associations with Lee Harvey Oswald, the presumed assassin of the American President J.F.Kennedy in Dallas Texas on 22nd November 1964. Oswald lived in Minsk between 1959-1962 and there married a Belarusan girl, Marina Pruskova; during his stay he earned his living as a checker in the *Harizont* radio television works and supplies store (no.44). His pay was



700 roubles a month, and on 16th March 1960 he recorded in his diary: "I got a small studio flat with kitchen and bathroom. Opposite the works (an 8 minutes walk). Wonderful views over the river from both balconies - virtually for free (60 roubles a month)". On Mayday of that year he met up for a party - dancing, singing and drinking - with a group of Belarusan emigrants from Argentina visiting Minsk. Most of his time in Minsk was spent being shepherded by "Intourist" officials and the Soviet Red Cross, travelling from time to time to Moscow. What precisely he was doing there is not known; a question mark continues to hang over his return to the United States and his own involvement, as well as that of other more skilled agencies, in the Dallas assassination.

One of the most popular and worthwhile sights in Minsk is the huge covered hall and open **Kamarouka market\*\***, the pavilion of which was built in 1979 to the design of a team of architects led by V. Aladau (the son of the composer). The main hall is a square construction 24 metres high and 100 metres in length and breadth, with four rectangular corner columns and sixteen narrow piers, between floor to roof glazing on each outer wall, supporting four shallow segmental arches. On these rests a tetrahydal domed pavilion roof culminating in a low squared central tower. There are a principal and a main side entrances, with staircases leading up to a gallery. The floor-space is divided into squared blocks of stalls, from each of which distinctive categories of food produce are sold - meat, cheese, sausages, thick white slabs of cured hogs-lard, eggs, flour products, with vegetables and fruits of all kinds. Stallholders rent their pitch from the market administration in the rear annexe, and charge prices for their goods in accordance with supply and demand. Butchery, overwhelmingly of pig meat, is performed with sharp knives and fearsome hand-axes reminiscent of mediaeval jousting weapons. Geese, ducks, chickens and fine beef from the Polacak region, as well as game can be obtained, though prices tend to be high. In warm weather the smells under the dome can become quite overpowering.

An outdoor area adjacent to the main pavillion has avenues of stalls dispensing all kinds of vegetables, herbs, dried and pickled apples, pears, mushrooms, plums, apricots, tomatoes, cucumbers, with tubs of pickled garlic, chilli peppers, cabbages, fermented carrots and other root-vegetables, paniers of wild berries, pots of jam and honey, flown in from as far away as the Caucasuses and Turkic Central Asia. Money-changers, hawkers and pedlars of bangles, bracelets, carpets and craftware ply their trade under the watchful eye of the market militia. Snacks, pies, pasties and drinks are available, but sit-down accommodation for meals tends to match the ethnic usages and cleanliness of the cosmopolitan marketeers. Whilst packaging is an art yet to be learned at Kamarouka, the quality of much of the seasonal produce on sale is often outstanding, and finely cured pickled garlic can become positively addictive.

A short walk south-eastwards down the vul. Charužej brings the visitor to the Plac Jakuba Kolasa, Skaryna Avenue and the *Metro* station.



## Minsk Stately Homes and Villas

The impermanency of wooden buildings and a turbulent history have not ensured the survival of many impressive private mansions and houses in Minsk. That such houses existed is witnessed by visitors to the city in the 17th century such as P. Tolstoy, who commented on the growing number of brick dwellings occupied by the nobility. The last vestiges of Minsk castle, with its *Lord Lieutenants residency*, and the brick-built *Sapieha mansion* in vul. Jurieúskaja were cleared within living memory. Similarly the 18th century *Hajdziukievič mansion* of Cathedral Square and the neo-Gothic *Čapski mansion* in vul. Skabaleúskaja (*Čyrvonaarmiejskaja*), later the Minsk *Gentlemen's Club* and a hospital has vanished. A bare half dozen of such stately homes remain, but officialdom is coy in its publications of giving the names of famous residents from before the utopic 'classless' Belaruś came into existence.

The handsome 18th century **City Mansion** at no.15 Cathedral Square opposite the Merchants Exchange was clearly at some time the town house of some magnate or affluent burgher, and the **Vankovič mansions** in vul. Valockaja (*Internacyjanalnaja E*)(no.33a) and by the Celuškin Park have already been described in previous Walkabouts (nos. 2 and 5).

**Kurasavišče Lodge**, at the southern end of vul. Kazinca in the outlying suburb of that name, built in the 1860's in an italianate style, is something of a curiosity, comprising a stubby, single storied Lodge with round arched fenestration, and an octagonal Belvedere with a roof parapet and balcony. The ground-level rusticated walls are surmounted by a dentilled cornice and a small triangular pediment; both the belvedere and the pediment are asymmetrically placed. The interior has a fine panelled staircase of oak, moulded ceilings and a lofty stove decorated with coloured ceramic tiles. The house stands in an attractively landscaped *Park* where the Lošyce and Myška streams meet and broaden out to form a small lake before joining the Svislač.

**Lošyce Manor** dating from the 1870's, and comprising the master house, a service annexe and a Park, is situated at the confluence of the Lošyce with the Svislač river at the southern end of vul. Majakoúskaha. The manor comprises two parts: a block built on three levels in an *art nouveau* hunting-lodge style, with a projecting gabled central section and a hipped-roof, linked by matching fenestration to a low wing of rustic design. A standard projecting entrance portico is raised on four timber piers, surmounted by a triangular pediment in rudimentary "carpenter's lace." A flight of steps leads up to the front door. The fenestration with framed rectangular windows each surmounted by a small triangular pediment, is derived from rural domestic architecture. One



projecting wing is entirely timber framed and faced with vertical clapboarding. The gable ends, and lucarne windows are topped with wooden finials. The interior is decorated with ornamental friezes and there are finely tile stoves in the spacious ground floor rooms. The Lošyce Park which surrounds the manor has a large number of oriental exotic trees.

## The Industrial Architecture of Minsk

Minsk has traditionally been a manufacturing city from its earliest origins, and its ceramic industry may lie at the origin of the legend of a giant miller Menesk or Minč who ground stones to bake into bread. Paper-making, light engineering, the tobacco and motor industries, textiles, brewing (*Leckert - Belaruś*) and foodstuffs were the basis of the city's growing prosperity. Napoleon's *Grande Armee* made short work of an abandoned biscuit warehouse in the area, and the quality confectionery of the *Kamunarka* works was widely appreciated in the former Soviet Union.

The finest concentration of industrial architecture is to be found in vul. Nižny Lachaúskaja (*Kastryčnickaja*), situated in the left-bank loop of the Svislač river just south-east of the present-day vul. Ulianaúskaja. The *Lane Tanning factory* (no. 19) was founded in 1891 and specialised in the preparation of kid-skin for glove-making; the works were originally of wood, but a more substantial series of brick buildings was erected in 1895 and later in 1927, of which the most impressive symmetrical section has pilasters and a horizontally sectioned gable. A malt-house and distillery (no. 14) founded in 1891 was reconstructed after 1945 and now produces yeast for bread.

The Leckert "Kristall" brewery and distillery (no. 15), established in 1892, occupies an interesting ensemble on three levels, with an asymmetrically disposed hip-roofed four-floored tower with an ornate upper tier of arched windows.

A fourth interesting ensemble is a machine tool factory (no. 16) with three functional elevated sections, one at each extremity and one asymmetrically placed, break up the sequence of pilastered fenestration of the main works. Originally the "Gigant" works, the factory was renamed "Enerhija" in 1912, and since the Bolshevik revolution it has continued as a machine tool factory.



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**THE MINSK  
REGION,  
THE LAHOJSK  
HILLS AND  
THE BIERAZINA.**

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**Zaslaŭski Lake\*\*** [*A-242 towards Maladzečna*] The lake and neighbouring forests with wild-life reservations 15km north-west of Minsk make this area an ideal holiday resort. Sailing, swimming, beach and other watersport facilities are among its popular attractions.

**Ždanovičy Spa \*** [*A-242 towards Maladzečna*] A sought-after watering-place by the Zaslaŭe lakeside, 10km. north-west of Minsk, it is famed for its pleasant situation and its sulphur, chlorine and nitrogen-rich springs of mineral waters. The *Krynica* and *Belarus* guest-houses and sanatoria cater for guests taking the waters. The resort is located in picturesque countryside with a fine choice of forests walks and rides. There is an equipped bathing beach.

**Ratamka** [*A-242 towards Maladzečna*] This internationally known riding-centre\* some 12 km. from Minsk, is famed for its dressage, show-jumping and forest pony-trekking. There is as yet no public race course in the capital.

**Zaslaŭe-na-Svislač\*\***. [*A-242 towards Maladzečna*] An ancient riverside township and fortress, 27km from Minsk [*A-242 towards Maladzečna*] on the north side of the Zaslaŭe lake. Formerly the domain of the Belarusan princely families of Zaslaŭski, Hlebovič and Sapieha, it is noted for its Fortress\*\* (16th c.) with earthworks, gateway and towered church (c.1590) of the *Transfiguration*, formerly a Calvinist chapel\*\*. The church now houses a *Museum* \* of popular arts. The impressive *Farny Church* \*(1774) altered and russified in 1868, retains many original features. The town is noted for the manufacture of ceramics and fine quality tiles (10th-18th c.), which the local clay and plentiful sources of fuel for the kilns helped develop. There is also a lakeside *Zaslaŭe* restaurant and conference centre (1979).

**Siomkava\*** [*A-242 towards Maladzečna, P-62 on right*], a historic little township lies on the north eastern shore of Zaslaŭe lake some 14 km from Minsk. It consisted of two domains: *Siomkava-Staraja* and *Siomkava-Salamiereckaja*, the latter of which vested in the Lithuanian Hedyholdovič family (*arms*: Rava). Piatro in 1447 became the founder of the Latin-rite church in Radaskavicy. The property then passed from the Hedyholdovičy to their kinsmen-at-arms, the Salamierecki, and ultimately through the Sapiehas to the Valadkovičy. The polemicist and future Uniate Archbishop of Polacak, Meletii Smatrycki (1577-1633) is said to have resided on the Salamierecki estate during his sojourn in Minsk at the end of the 16th century. The Valadkovičy in 1711 later acquired the estate of *Siomkava Staraja* or *Zaslaŭskaja*. The town has an attractive single-storied 18th century *manor house* \* with a hipped roof and symmetrical façade; its entrance is set in a portico of four pilasters



and a triangular pediment with an *oeil-de-boeuf* attic window. The interior apartments are served by a central corridor with the front entrance leading into a large bow-fronted salon. The master-house is flanked by two annexe wings of similar, and only slightly more modest design; the manor is set in a landscaped park by the river. The Latin-rite *Church of the Holy Trinity* was built in the second half of the 19th century in the neo-classical style, of plain rectangular shape with a pitched roof. The interior ornamentation is no longer extant. The adjacent lakeside facilities for vacationing children and locals include "garden and camping sites" still bearing such alluring pre-Independence names as "Kirov's camp", "Young Communard", and "Forty Years of Pioneering".

**Radaškovičy\*** [*A-242 to Maladzečna*] Approximately 60 km to the north of Minsk this old town is mentioned in records dating from 1447. Its timber-framed castle extant in 1549, was successively the apanage of the Haštold family, Queen and Grand-Duchess Bona Sforza, and the Hlabovič, Ahinski and Radzivil families. During the 1831 Uprising the inhabitants rallied to the insurgents. The town has a Catholic Church built 1850c. in a traditional Classical style with twin towers in four step-back tiers. It has strong literary associations: the house of the well-known philologist and patriot Academician Branislaŭ Taraškievič (1892-1938) still stands in the street that bears his name (no. 16). The fabulist Anton Lavicki *alias* Jadvihin Š (1868-1922) and the writer A. Čarniševič (1912-1967) also lived here. A memorial to the former stands opposite the apothecary's shop in vul. Šavieckaja. Radaškavičy is a centre of the ceramics industry for which the area has been famous from prehistoric times.

**Rakaŭ\*\*** [*M-12 towards Vilnia*] is a small but historic township some 32km north-west Minsk by the river Islač, a tributary of the Nioman. In Grand Ducal times it was a Royal domain, but in 1465 it was granted by Kasimier Jahajlavič to the Kiežgajla family for services rendered, through whom it passed to the Zavišas in 1550, and in the early 17th century to the Sanhuška, who held the castle of Rakaŭ until the end of the 18th century. Jazep Sanhuška, Marshal of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś, was from 1750-1781 the overlord of the town. It was formerly richly endowed with monastic foundations - the Dominicans and Basilians as well as a Belarusan Orthodox confraternity. Of these, a fine Greek-rite *Church of the Transfiguration* (1793)\* in the classical style survives, with an interesting arched gateway and belfry. The west front is decorated with a triangular pediment and pilasters. There is a saucer shaped central cupola with a turret and unobtrusive baroque onion-dome. The *Catholic Church* (1906)\* by the river is a neo-



Gothic structure with twin towers and steeples in strikingly decorative yellow and red brickwork of almost Burgundian exuberance. There is a pretty mid-19th century *Chapel* in an original classical style with a broken pediment surmounted by three rectangular turrets. An ornamental triple arched gateway and belfry leads to a round-arched entrance. The town was also the location of a historic Jewish cemetery. The Belarusian composer Michal Hrušvicki (1828-1904) is buried in the town in which he spent his latter years. Rakaú is an excellent centre for exploring the headwaters of the Nioman and Svislač as well as the picturesque hills and valleys of the Mount Kojdan region.

**Volma\*** [*M-12 towards Vilnia, then left along P-65 towards Ivaniec*] Noted for its wooden Church of the Assumption (1751), formerly with two towers, its Park, its fish farm (*carp*), and the nearby Kajdanaú mountain (346m.), the highest in Belaruś. An earlier Church founded in 1474 by the Doukševič family is no longer extant. The manor house was the property of the patrician Vankovič family of Minsk; dating from the early 19th century, it is raised on two floors with a hipped roof, two triangular dormer windows and asymmetrical fenestration on the lower levels. The colonnaded portico is no longer extant, the building now being the administrative centre of a State farm. There are attractive period outbuildings and a fine avenue of trees in the park.

**Ivianiec\*** [*M-12 towards Vilnia then P-63 on the left*] on the banks of the river Volma, a former royal domain of the Grand Duke Vitaút, boasts a fine baroque Franciscan *Church* \*(1702), a *Monastery* \*(1702) and a striking red-brick and spired neo-Gothic Catholic *Church of St. Alexis* (1905). The town took part in Kalinoúski's 1863 Uprising, siding with the insurgents. It has literary associations with the 19th. century poets V. Dunin Marcinkievič and Jadvihin Š; there is also an early 20th c. Manor House and a castellated Museum dedicated to the dark "Knight of the Revolution" and commissioner of police, Felix Dzierżyński. Another noted Bolshevik, M. Frunze also lived here. The proximity of extensive forests and hill-country has made it a sought after resort.

**Ptič\*\*** [*M-1 towards Kojdanava-Dzierżyńsk*] A pleasant woodland beach by a small lake 15 km. south-west of Minsk. A well-run Motel, camping site and *restaurant* \* are located nearby. A short drive along the southern shore of the lake leads to **Stročyce\***, a picturesque *Skansen village* and open air museum of old Belarusian rural architecture, still under development. There is a fine wooden church, a windmill, cottages and barns already established on a hill site overlooking Ptič lake. Occasional country folklore festivals and concerts are organised here.



Nearby at *Haradyšča*, on the banks of the rivulet *Menka*, is the reputed original site of Minsk in the prehistoric days of the *Kryvičy* tribe, before its removal to the confluence of the Niamiha and Svislač rivers. It was built as a hill fort to control the flow of trade between the headwaters of the Ptič river, a tributary of the Dniapro, and the headwaters of the Islač which flows north-eastwards into the Nioman. To the east across the highway lies the 18th century Palace of Anopal.

**Anopal** [ *M-1 towards Kojdanava* ] A Radzivil estate some 16 km south of Minsk on the river Ptyč near the lake, and the site of a popular local *Corpus Christi* Fair. The palace, built in the mid-18th century was for many years the residence of Princess Joanna, widow of Alexander Radzivil. Built of brick, it comprises a single storey building with a two-storied wing surmounted by a triangular pediment on the main façade. The gardens and park contain a small period annexe with fine groups and avenues of linden and maple trees.

**Stajki** recreational area lies 15km to the north-east of Minsk, and is popular on account of its sporting facilities - gymnastics, football pitches, running tracks, fencing, volleyball. There is also a hotel, restaurant, library, cinema and rehabilitation centre.

**Raubichi\*** [ *A-245 towards Lahojšk* ] An Olympic complex (tournaments, winter sports) in attractive Lahojšk hill-country, some 22 km. north-east of Minsk. Its charming white stucco neo-Gothic Church (1858) now houses the *Museum* \* of Belarusian folk-art.

**Lahojšk** [ *A-245 towards Lepel* ] 40 km. to the north of Minsk. This historic Township is mentioned in the Chronicles as a fortress of the Principality of Polacak (1078). It was granted by Grand Duke Kazimir Jahailavič to the Greek-rite Čartaryski family (*arms*: Pahonia). Later the palace passed to the Belarusian Tyškievič family. There is an attractive Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas (1824)\* in the traditional Belarusian renaissance style. The hill country in the region, which includes the *Lysa Hora* ("Bald Mountain"), is noted for its picturesque scenery favoured by artists.

**Viazynka**, [ *A-242 towards Radaškavičy* ] 38 km to the north-west of Minsk, was the birthplace of the national poet Janka Kupala (1882-1942). A timber-frame 19th century single storied cottage in attractive grounds houses a small museum\* opposite which is a bronze bust of the poet by the leading contemporary sculptor Z. Azhur.

**Stankava\*\*** [ *M-1 to Kojdanava-Dziaržynsk, then side-road left to Stankava 8km.* ] on the banks of the river Usa, lies some 44 km to the south-west of Minsk. It was an erstwhile estate of the Čapski family (*arms*: Leliva), of Baltic origin but well established in Minsk in the



19th century, and associated with the brewing industry. Their distinctive Flemish-Gothic town house in vul. Skabaleúskaja, Minsk became the *Gentleman's Club* in the early 20th century, and later a hospital. The romantic Čapski country residence (1880) is an attractive and unusual step-gabled manor on two floors, with rusticated corner pilasters and a narrow intermediate cornice. The upper five rectangular windows on the main facade set off the attractive lancet windows on the ground level. The main entrance is on the side beneath the stepped gable. There is a separate, charmingly castellated *Library* \* on two floors with four attached corner towers, each surmounted by a conical turret. The large pointed arched French windows and an ornamental wrought iron balcony over the main entrance and the strip friezes are interesting features. A classical single storied, hip-roofed annexe in the classical style has rusticated pilasters, a roof line cornice and an attic-floor lunule window. The surrounding landscaped *park* \* has a charming octagonal colonnaded *rotunda* \* with a polyhedral beehive dome, a step-gabled arched *Eastern Gateway* and fine views toward the ruined Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas (1858). At present the manor is occupied by a boarding school. Stankava also retains the birthplace of the young Bolshevik war-time hero Marat Kazej (1929-1944), who lies buried here.

**Vialikija Navasiolki\*** [*M-1 to Dziaržinsk-Kojdanava, then P-65 then right towards Zaslaúe*] is the site of the poet K. Kahaniec's grave, and the Kastravicki [*arms*: Kastraviec] family mansion. Kahaniec was the pen-name of Kazimier Kastravicki (1868-1918), born in Tobolsk, Siberia, the son of an insurgent, exiled for his part in the 1863 Uprising. Returning to Belaruś in 1872, he attended High School in Minsk, later studying art in Moscow and Riga. Caught up in anti-Tsarist agitation during the 1905 revolution, he was twice imprisoned in the notorious Minsk *Piščalaúski Fortress*. Described as "a civilised and many-sided talent" (Arnold B. McMillin) he is chiefly remembered for his drama and short stories: his comedy *Modny Slachciuk* ("A Gentleman of fashion") was first performed on *tournee* by the Bujnicki Theatrical emsemble at the Music Hall Theatre of the *Hotel de Paris* in Minsk (1910).

The Mansion in Navasiolki, built in about 1830, has a pilastered façade and an impressive projecting portico, with a curious clapboarded triangular pediment resting on four Doric columns. Standing in a small park by the banks of the river Usa, it was also the ancestral home of the Franco-Belarusan writer Guillaume Apollinaire.

**Kuchcičy\*** near Uzda [*M-1 towards Baranavičy, then A-248 left to Uzda*] was the hereditary estate of the Zaviša family (*arms*: Labiedz).



Originally of the Greek-rite, part of the family became Calvinists in the 16th century, before definitively adopting the Latin-rite in the 17th century. The mansion was associated with Kryštof Zaviša, but more particularly with Jan Zaviša, the noted 19th century archeologist. His daughter Princess Mahdalena Radzivil (1861-1945) who inherited the estate was, like her father, renowned for her hospitality and her concern for the aspirations and welfare of the Belarusan people, as related in the memoirs of her estate manager Justin Muraška. The estate comprised "gardens, a beautiful palace full of relics of the past, and a fine chapel". The Kuchčicy estate now forms part of the Siamionavicy rural district (*Sielsaviet*) in which lies a fine erstwhile *Calvinist Chapel* (c.1560)\* flanked by two circular towers and a central polyhedral nave with a low central spire similar to that of Smarhoni; later it served as a Catholic Church. Here the body of her second husband Prince Rafael Nicholas Vaclaú Radzivil (1880-1914) was buried in 1915, after his death on the battlefields of East Prussia serving under the Tsarist General Rennenkampf. The poet-priest Andrej Ziaziula on this occasion preached his funeral oration in the Belarusan language.

The Zaviša neo-classical palace (c.1830) with its surrounding lawns, park and avenues of linden trees overlooking the river, are no more, but two spacious early-19th century *annexes* \* in period style, with colonnaded porticos and pilasters have survived and must, like her steward Justyn Muraška, have witnessed the comings and goings of Ivanoúski, Lastoúski, Aliaksiuk, Ulasaú, the Luckievič brothers and other national leaders, to whom the Princess donated 60.000 roubles for various Belarusan causes. Prince Nicholas did not go short, however, for apart from a settlement of 15 million roubles from his wife, he had more than 40 thorough-bred horses in his stables. This entertaining and dashing young professional soldier, (he was 20 years younger than Princess Mahdalena) had in 1898 served as a lieutenant in *Kitchener's Fighting Scouts* against the Boers in South Africa, fought against the Turks in the Balkans and then campaigned against the Japanese at Port Arthur. He was also said to have had a morbid obsession with the dexterity of his toes, lying on his bed and opening a box of matches, from which he would then carefully extract a match with his toes and strike it. Whether or how this pleasant eccentric then offered his indulgent wife a light for the cigarettes she frequently smoked, is not related.

With some advice from the grammarian Losik, all the Princess' accounts in her 18 Kuchcičy holdings were kept in the Belarusan language. To those of her employees who did not speak the language, she allowed two months to adapt to Belarusan, failing which they were dis-



missed - though she did give some extra coaching to her German Forestry manager Stahl. The Princess herself did the rounds of her estates, to see that her rule was being observed; she also opened Belarusan schools in Kamieniec and Uzda. To organise the school in Kuchcičy, she employed Stanislava, the sister of the poetess Kanstancija Bujla, paying her a salary of 20.000 roubles per annum with free lodgings. She greatly enjoyed attending the children's theatrical performances in Belarusan, and insisted on paying 100 roubles for her ticket. Driven from her Palace by the Bolsheviki in late 1919, the Polish authorities later refused to let her return; her immense estates were lost, her ancestral home destroyed, its contents dispersed, and she died an exile in Switzerland in 1945. The erstwhile Zaviša estate and out-buildings now form part of the Siamionavicki Agricultural Technical College.

**Smilavičy\*** [*A-244 towards Biarazina* ], situated some 32 km. to the South-east of Minsk, is famous as the birthplace of the well-known painter Chaim Soutine (1894-1943), a friend of Modigliani, who like Marc Chagall spent most of his active life in France. The 10th out of 11 children of a poor tailor, he was locked in the cellar by his angry father for having spent money on buying art crayons. Working in a Minsk photographic studio in 1907 he was injured in a fight with the son of a local rabbi, who was ordered to pay him 25 roubles compensation: he used the money to travel to Vilnia to complete his art studies.

The town is noted for its picturesque "gothick" palace dating from the early 19th century, and its landscaped park. A substantial annexe was added in the late 19th century, also in the neo-Gothic style, but with interesting elements of art nouveau. There are also two period annexes in the park, which now serve as administrative offices. In the 16th century the village successively formed part of the estates of the Bakštanski, Kiežhajla, Sapieha, Zaviša, Ahinski and Maniuško families. In 1886 it had 500 inhabitants, 3 Greek-rite churches and a mosque.

**Dračkava** in the Smilavicki region has a pretty wooden, late-19th century *Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian*, badly delapidated.

**Ubiel** [*A-244 to Biarazina* ] south-east of Minsk beyond Smilavičy, is the neglected birthplace of the Belarusan-Polish composer S. Maniuška (1819-1872). The family owned estates in the Minsk area. Maniuška composed the first 19th century Belarusan opera *Sielanka* ("The country girl") to a mixed Belarusan and Polish libretto by the Minsk poet, V. Dunin Marcinkievič.

**Dukora** [*A- 250 towards Babrujsk* ] situated some 32 km. from Minsk once had a fine early 19th century palace of which only a neo-classical annexe with a hipped roof and lower-level rustication subsists.



together with an interesting towered gateway and a gable-and-valley pinnacled roof in the Byzantino-Gothic style.

**Ravaničy** \* [ *M-1 towards Orša, right P-66* ] Further out to the east lies the former palace and parklands of the Slatvinski family (*arms*: Leliva) who originated from Navahrada. Stanislaŭ Slatvinski served with distinction against Ivan the Terrible under Stefan Batory at the siege of Pskov (1581). The local Greek-rite parish-church of the Nativity of the Theotokos (1790) and the classical Latin-rite church of St. Anthony (1799) with its west front in the form of a colonnaded portico and triangular pediment, were foundations of Anton Slatvinski. The interior is decorated with paintings of Biblical themes. His son Ludvik, Marshal of the *gubernija* of Minsk under the Tsars (1853-1859), built the Palace of Ravaničy (c.1850) in the late classical style on two floors, with a projecting portico of four columns, approached by a flight of steps. The main house is flanked by two lateral annexes, and is set in a landscaped park with an attractive chain of artificial lakes. The family founded a textile and clothing manufactory in the town in the mid-1850s; their forest estates also produced charcoal, resin, turpentine and tar.

**Barysaŭ**\*[*M-1 towards Orša* ] is a historic town on the **Route Napoleon** \* near the site of the successful bridging and crossing of the Bierazina at Studzianka, directed by the French Emperor himself. Although there is a monument (1962) erected here in Soviet times to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the crossing, there seems to have been little to celebrate on the Russian side. The French imperial Headquarters were at Zaniŭki; the delapidated cottage occupied by Napoleon was jocularly referred to by his men as "Le Palais". Whilst Kutuzov dawdled in the rear, sleeping 15 hours a day, his officers too disorganised or (according to Colonel Marbot) too drunk to attack, Marechal Eble's sappers in a brilliant operation, up to their necks in the icy river, dismantled and converted half the left-bank village of Studzianka into three gang-plank bridges in a few short hours.

Across these, the bulk of the French Army was able to pass with much of their artillery and transports. The columns of the Old Guard, riding with Napoleon, carved through Platov's Cossacks, as the Russian partisan chief Davydov averred, "like a battleship through a fishing fleet". In the absence of Kutuzov, who had bungled the plan to surround Napoleon, the Russian admiral Chichagov and his 27,000 men "remained becalmed", "at anchor", (as the *mauvaises langues* of St. Petersburg put it ), after being driven away from the crossings by Oudinot, Ney and Dambrowski with only 9,000 men (including a corps of Belarusan volunteers). Marechal Victor with 6,000 men was able to



hold off Wittgenstein's force of 40.000 Russians, and himself cross the Bierazina safely under heavy artillery fire, leaving a rearguard to hold the bridgehead. Some 9.000 stragglers and a considerable amount of abandoned booty from Moscow were captured by the Russians after the French burnt the bridges to prevent Wittgenstein from crossing. As the Russian Baron Loewenstern commented: "One must give Napoleon his due, and not conceal the fact that his conduct at the crossing of the Bierazina was beyond all praise... He did not lose his head at such a difficult moment. Attacked and surrounded on all sides, he tricked our generals by wily diversionary feints, and carried out his crossings under their noses and through their very whiskers. The deterioration of the bridges was the sole cause of the losses the French sustained." Between 70.000 and 80.000 men out of the 160.000 who had set out from Smalensk and survived Borodino made it back to the Bierazina

The *Route Napoleon* passed through Plaščany (where, Prince Murat having beaten off a Cossack foray, Napoleon and his staff spent their third night after crossing the Bierazina), Ilja, Maladziečna and Smarhoni to Vilnia, but there was little further Russian action on account of the extreme cold. The Russian cavalry also lost many horses, and their infantry, like the French, had to find food and shelter in the rare villages as best they could. In the forests between the Biarazyna and Maladziečna occurred the worst of the French losses at the hand of "General Winter", though most of the 70.000 men who arrived at Smarhoni and Vilnia were still marching in rank, led by their officers. At Smarhoni Napoleon was constrained to ride on ahead back to Paris, to counter the conspiracy of General Malet. The remaining French, Swiss, German, Italian and even Portuguese soldiers were sometimes taken in by friendly villagers. It is said some stayed on to marry local girls, and father Belarusan families with names like Banket (Banquette), Navara, Šulć, Orsa, and Šmit, to name but a few. The Russians in Belaruś by contrast were, according to the Tsar's *aide de camp* Benckendorff, generally treated with hostility.

Back in Vilnia, the survivors found stores and warm quarters, though largely on a 'help-yourself' basis, at the expense of the indignant Jews. To a happy few, according to an old Belgian soldier of the Imperial Guard, the stores of the French High Command and the departed Emperor's household yielded: "quality flour, bacon, fine oil, rice and good wine, champagne even, and excellent cognac. We had a fry-up all night long; we made bread and baps, and there was an oven-baked ham". And as another tough old Guardsmen philosophised, as he dried out his snuff by the fire: "We're all done for, but no matter. We gave



them a good hiding at every turn, all the same. Those 'Russkis' are just a gang of schoolboys."

**Four suggested Motor tours:** **Route 1. ZASLAÚE LAKE TOUR** (North )\*\*: *Ždanovičy Spa - Ratomka - Zaslaúe-na-Svislač - Viazianka - Radaškavičy - Sienkava - Zaslaúe lake and Swannery reservation - Belaruś Spa Hotel.*

**Route 2. HILLS AND CASTLES TOUR** (West )\*\*: *Rakaú - Volma - Ivaniec - Vialikyja Novasielki - Kojdanava (Dziaržynsk) - Stankava - Kuchcičy - Anopal - Ptyč - Stročyce.*

**Route 3. SOUTH EASTERN TOUR**\*: *Smiliavičy - Dračkava - Ubiel - Dukora - Ravaničy.*

**Route 4. BIARAZYNA TOUR** (North East)\*: *Raúbičy - Lahojšk - Barysaú - Bierazina - Route Napoleon - Barysaú Nature reserve.*

### **FURTHER AFIELD:**

**Niasviž\*\*\* - Mir\*\*\* - Navahradak\*\*\***

However little of the Belarusan Renaissance heritage may have survived in Minsk, this is more than made up for by the triangle of historic fortress towns lying in the very heartland of Belaruś some 80km to the south-west of the capital: Navahradak, Mir and Niasviž. A car excursion passes through **Stoúbcy**, on the outskirts of which lies **Akinčycy\*\***, the charming birthplace cottage of Jakub Kolas (1882-1956), one of the great names of Belarusan literature. The timbered small-holding and outbuildings are now preserved as a museum. The Greek-rite church of St. Anne (1825) in Stoúbcy is worth a visit.

**Niasviž\*\*\*** The principal seat of the Princes Radzivil: from the 16th century almost continuously high Officers of State in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś. *Sights:* City Tower (c.1560)\*; Town Hall and Staple (1586, 1752)\*\*; Burgher houses (16th and 17th c.)\*; Jesuit Church (1584-1593)\*\*; Benedictine Monastery (1590); Bernhardine convent (1598)\*; Palace (16th -18th c.)\*\*\*; Slucak Gate (c.1670); Ramesnik house (1721).

**Mir\*\*\*** One of the great fortresses of Eastern Europe. Another apanage of the Radzivil family, later owned by Princes Sviatapolk Mirski. *Sights:* Holy Trinity Church (1533- 1550)\*\*; The Castle (1568)\*\*\*; Church of St. Nicholas (1599-1605)\*\*; Chapel of rest (1904). Site of a world-famous Jewish *Yeshiva* (Rabbinical school, 1805-1941) with daughter houses in Booklyn (N.Y.) and Jerusalem. Mir was also the seat of a Gypsy King



**Navahradak\*\*\*** The first capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Belaruś (c.1200-1394) prior to Vilnia and see of the Greek-rite Metropolitans of Kiev after 1240; seat of the Grand Ducal Parliament (*Sejm*) (1448, 1508, 1538); Alternate session city for the High Court of the Grand Duchy; One of the first major Jewish settlements in Belaruś (1445). *Sights*: Ruins of the Fortress (13th-16th c.); Church of SS Barys and Hleb (1519, 1628); old Burgher houses (16th-18th c.); Farny Church (1712); St. Michael's Church (1751); Franciscan monastery (1780); Birthplace of the poet Adam Mickievič (1798-1855).

Among the other principal historic cities of Belaruś worth visiting are **Polacak\*\*\***, the capital of the first Belarusian state (988) and birthplace of Francis Skaryna (c.1485-c.1550); **Hrodnia\*\*\*** - the Royal summer capital of the Grand Duke Jahajla and favourite castle of Grand Duke Stefan Batory; **Viciebsk\*\*** for its ancient churches, famous School of Art, and *shtetl* memories of Marc Chagall (1885-1985) and Aaron Copeland (b. 1900); **Mahilou\*\*** for its remarkable church of St. Nicholas (1636); **Pinsk \*\*\*** for its architecture, churches, icons and the wooden churches and manors of Bierascie\* region and Palessia; also for Karlin the birthplace of Jewish *Habad Hasidism*; **Homiel\*\*** for its classical and modern architecture, along with many other smaller towns of individuality and charm.

Picturesque countryside and nature resorts include: The **Harodnia Highlands\*** (centre: Harodnia); **Lake Naroč**, the largest lake in Belaruś; The **Blue Lakes region \*\*** (centre: Braslaú) in North-western Belaruś; the **Palessian wetlands** (centre: Pinsk); the **Forest of Bielavieža \*\*** (centre: Bierascie); **Barysaú Wild Life Reserve\*** (centre: Barysaú); **Lahojsk and Kojdanaú Hills \*** (centre: Minsk, Zaslaúe). The centres indicated are best suited for car tours in the surrounding areas.



## MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITIONS

# **FACILITIES AND ENTERTAINMENTS**

## THEATRES, CONCERT HALLS, CLUBS



## MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITIONS

- Belarusan National Museum \*\*** - Padhornaja (*K. Marxa*) 12.  
**National Art Museum of Belarus \*\*\*** - vul. Franciškanskaja (*Lenina*) 20  
**Gallery of the Society of Artists of Belaruś** - Padhornaja (*K. Marxa*) 8.  
**Jakub Kolas Literary Museum\*** - Pr. Skaryny 66a.  
**Janka Kupala Literary Museum \*** - Ja. Kupala 4.  
**Palace of Arts** - Daŭhabrodskaja (*Kazlova*) 3.  
**Exhibition Hall of the Belarusan Palace of Commerce** - Jakuba Kolasa 65.  
**Belarusan Building Exhibition** - Parkavy Mahistral (*Pr. Mašerava*) 65.  
**Exhibition of the achievements of the Belarusan national economy** -  
Ja. Kupaly, 27.  
**Rumianceŭ House Museum** - Pr. Skaryny 31a.  
**Planetarium** - Minsk City Park (Svislač river Gardens).  
**Belarusan Museum of the World War II.** - Pr. Skaryny 25a.  
**P. Broŭka Literary Museum** - Padhornaja (*K. Marxa*) 30.

## THEATRES, CONCERT HALLS, CIRCUS

- Беларуская Філармонія** - Belarusan Philharmonia, Pr. Skaryny 50.  
**Зал Камернай Музыкі БФ** - Philharmonia Chamber Music Hall (Trinity St. Roch), Pr. Skaryny 44a.  
**Беларускі Тэатр Оперы і Балета** - Belarusan Academic Theatre, Opera and Ballet, Paškeviča 23.  
**Цырк** - Circus, Pr. Skaryny 32.  
**Тэатр Дома Афіцэраў** - Military Club Theatre, Skabaleŭskaja (*Cyrvonaarmejskaja*) 3.  
**Тэатр ім ЯКупалы** - J.Kupala Theatre, Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) 7  
**Беларуская Кансерваторыя** - Belarusan Conservatoire Concert Hall, Valockaja (*Internacyjanalnaja*) 30.  
**Беларускі Тэатр Лялек** - Belarusan Puppet Theatre, Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) 20.  
**Тэатр юнага глядача** - Belarusan Young Peoples Theatre, Daminikanskaja (*Enhielsa*) 26.  
**Рускі Драматычны Тэатр** - Theatre of Russian Dramatic Art, Losyckaja (*Valadarskaja*) 5  
**Беларускі Тэатр Музычнай Камедыі** - Belarusan Theatre of Musical Comedy, Miasnikova 44.



## CINEMAS

- Вільнюс - "Vilnius", vul. Kalinoúskaha 55  
Партизан - "Partysan", vul. Tolbuchina 18.  
Кіеў - "Kiev", vul. Kachoúskaja 31.  
\*Кастрычнік - "Kastryčnik", Pr. Skaryny 73.  
\*Масква - "Maskva", Pr. Mašerava 13.  
Мір - "Mir", vul. Kazlova 31.  
Аўрора - "Aurora", pl. Prytyckaha.  
Беларусь - "Belaruś", vul. Respublikanskaja 28  
\*Піянер - "Pijanier", vul. Enhielsa 20.  
\*Перамога - "Pieramoha", vul. Internacyjanalnaja 30.  
Зьмена - "Žmiena", vul. Daúhabrodskaja 4.  
Сучасьнік - "Sučasnik", vul. Charkaúskaja 70.  
Цэнтральны - "Centralny", Pr. Skaryny 13.  
Ракета - "Raketa", Rabočy zav. 3.  
Камсамолец - "Kamsamolec", vul. Žylunoviča 39.  
Салют - "Salut", Pr. Rakasaúskaha 150a.  
Электрон - "Elektron", vul. Kazinca 117.  
Дружба - "Družba", vul. Taškentskaja 9.

## SPORTS

**General:** Universal Sports Centre, vul. Kalinoúskaha 111 (*for enquiries*).

— Dvorec Sporta, Pr. Mašerava 4.

**Football:** Football Centre Sports Committee, Pr. Mašerava 22 (*for enquiries*).

— "Dynamo" Stadium, vul. Kirava 8.

**Swimming:** "Orlenok" Swimming pool, vul. Kachoúskaja 74.

**Tennis:** Dvorec Tenisa, Pr. Mašerava 63 (*for enquiries*).

**Gymnastics:** Nacyjanalny Dom Fizykultury, Pr. Skaryny 32b.

**Riding:** Riding School Centre, Ratamka (about 12 km. north-west of Minsk).

**Chess and Draughts:** Dvarec Šachmat i Šašek, vul. K. Marxa 10.



## HOTELS

- Акадэмічная** - "Akademičnaja", vul. Surhanava. (*Pleasant small hotel for locals. A la Carte light lunches*).
- Алгарытм** - "Alharitm", vul. Prytyckaha 60 / 2.
- Аэрапарта** - "Aeraporta", vul. Aeradromnaja, 1 / 4
- Беларусь** - "Belaruś", vul. Staražeúskaja 15. (*High-rise left-bank Hotel. International standard. Bureau de Change. Good restaurant(s), coffee shops and bars on different floors*)
- Палаца Шахмат і шашак** - "Dvorca Šachmat i šašek", vul. Padhornaja (*Марха*) 10.
- Дружба** - "Družba", vul. Talbuchina 3.
- Зьвязда** - "Zviazda", Pr. Hazety 'Izvestija' 47.
- Кастрычнік** - "Kastryčnik", vul. Engelsa. (*High class, conveniently situated Hotel with wide choice of menu. Cuisine soignée and elegant "decor rustique". Gargantuan breakfasts available*).
- Мінск** - "Minsk", Pr. Skaryny 11.
- Матэль "Мінскі"** - "Minsk Motel", Breščkae Šosse. 16km. from Central Minsk.
- Планета** - "Planeta", Pr. Mašerava 25. (*Modern and convenient hotel for the quieter International traveller*)
- Сьвіслач** - "Svislač", vul. Kirava 13. (*Old fashioned and historic hotel with an art deco period decor. A favourite haunt for writers and connoisseurs of old Minsk*).
- Савецкая** - "Savietskaja", vul. Ščorsa 5.
- Спутнік** - "Sputnik", vul. Bryleúskaja 2.
- Юбілейная** - "Jubilejnaja", Pr. Mašerava 19. (*Bustling high-rise Hotel with fine views over Svislač Gardens. Cuisine bourgeoise, service unhurried; dinner dances, wedding parties. Amusingly cosmopolitan clientele*).
- Зьвязда** - "Zviazda", Pr. Haziety "Izviestija" 47.

## RESTAURANTS

### **BELARUSAN AND EAST EUROPEAN CUISINE:**

- Арбат** - "Arbat", (I) Pr. F. Skaryny 143/ 1 Tel: 644235 §
- Аэрапорта** - "Aeroporta", (\*) Čkalava. Tel: 253474 ¶



- Беларусь - "Belaruś" (\*), Staražeúskaja. Tel: 347605 ¶  
 Верас - "Vieras" (I), Slavinskaha. Tel. 643236 §  
 Вячэрні - "Viačerny" (II), Pr. Puškina 28. Tel: 512425 ¶  
 Дняпро - "Dniapro" (I), Bvd. Šeúčenka 8. Tel: 370631 ¶  
 Журавінка - "Žuravinka" (\*), Janka Kupaly 25. Tel: 224882 ¶. (*Pleasantly situated in a park; riverside views* ).  
 Заслаўе - "Zaslaúje" (I), P/o Ždanavičy. Tel: 998256 ¶  
 Зялёны Луг - "Zialiony Luh" (I), Karbyšava 11. Tel: 630407 ¶  
 Каменная Кветка - "Kamenny Cvietok"(\*), Talbuchina 12. Tel: 663743§  
 Колас - "Kolas" (I), O. Košahava 2. Tel: 442004 ¶  
 Мінск - "Minsk" (\*), Pr. Skaryny 11. Tel: 202344 ¶  
 Папараць Кветка - "Paparać Kvietka" (\*), Sviardlova 2. Tel: 205673 ¶ (*Reputedly good cuisine in art deco. surroundings* ).  
 Патсдам - "Potsdam" (I), Franciškanskaja (*Lenina* ) 2. Tel: 220523 ¶ (*Teutonic [DDR] decor and cuisine in a convenient site in heart of the Upper Town. Good choice, quality variable; German beer episodically available* ).  
 Прамень - "Pramien" (I), Niakrasava 5. Tel: 321576 ¶  
 Раўбічы - "Raubičy" (I), d.Akalica. Tel: 229202 §  
 Сьвіслач - "Svislač" (\*), Kirava 13. Tel: 206131 ¶ ( *A hotel restaurant facing vul. Mahazinnaja, with period decor in the folklore style and a literary clientele. Cuisine reputedly good* ).  
 Сьвіцязь - "Šviciaz" (I), Pr. Skaryny 84a. Tel: 648081 ¶ (*Restaurant on three floors: ground floor bar with snacks; upstairs Restaurants with traditional Belarusian cuisine near Cialuškincaú Park* )  
 Сосны - "Sosny" (I), Pr. Partyzanski 70a. Tel: 450073 ¶  
 Чайка - "Čajka" (I), Talbuchina 13. Tel: 611581 ¶

### **INTERNATIONAL CUISINE:**

- Asiatic:** "Teatralnae"(I), M. Bahdanoviča 6. (*General Oriental Chop-suey / Curry -house* ).  
**German:** "Potsdam", Plac Saborny (Voly) (*Fashionable establishment with East German style cuisine and beer.* )  
**Middle Eastern:** "Uzbekistan", Kirava 25 (*Central Asian, Turkish, Caucasian* )

\* = *Hors categorie*

I = First Grade establishment

II = Second Grade establishment

§ = Closed on Mondays

¶ = Open daily from 12h00-23h00

**N.B.:** All information is subject to variation in the light of changing social and economic circumstances.



## CAFES

- Кафэ 2 - "Cafe 2".(II), Žudro 51.  
Кафэ - "Cafe" (I), Ubareviča 58.  
Кафэ - "Cafe" (II), Alšeúskaha 75a.  
Адпачынак - "Adpačynak" (I), Internacyjanalnaja 11. (*An elegant and famous old restaurant "Soutine", still in use, but run down. Period vestiges, with stained glass and music; "more comfortable and cheaper than Moscow and St. Petersburg". Founded 1887*).
- Айсберг - "Iceberg" (II), Bahdanoviča 143.  
Альфа - "Alpha" (II), Jakubova 69.  
Арэса - "Aressa" (II), Kyžavatava 66a.  
Беларусь - "Belarus" (\*), Kamunističnaja 46.  
Белая Вежа - "Belaja Veža" (I), Varvašni 17.  
Беражок - "Berežok" (II), Kazinca 49.  
Бярозка - "Biarozka" (I), Pr. Skaryny 40.  
Брыганьціна - "Bryhantina" (I), Pr. Skaryny 42. (*A splendidly located cafe restaurant on Victory Square, near the foreign Embassy quarter, with typical Minsk cuisine, wines and spirits.*)
- Бульбяная - "Bulbianaja" (I), Pr. Skaryny 53.  
Варна - "Varna" (II), Pr. Lubimova 10.  
Вясна - "Viasna" (I), Pr. Skaryny 18.  
Ветразь - "Vietraz" (I), Čarviakova 23.  
Вільнюс - "Vilnius" (I), Kalinoúskaha 55  
Валгаград - "Volhahrad" (II), Pr. Hazety 'Pravda' 40.  
Поры года - "Vremena Hoda" (II), Karala 9.  
Час - "Vremia" (II), DK 'Vozchod'.  
Вянок - "Vianok" (II), Borodinskaja 19.  
ГУМ-а - "GUM" (II), Pr. Skaryny 21.  
Дыялог - "Dialoh" [video-cafe] (II), Rafieva 7.  
Дом Літаратара - "Dom Litaratara" (I), Frunze 5. (*A modern but historic cafe and Bar, popular with radical literati in the 1980s*).
- Дом Ветэранаў- "U Janki", vul. Janky Kupaly (*A former club for ex-Servicemen, now public*)
- Дубок - "Dubok" (II), D. Serdica 7.  
Елачка - "Jelačka" (II), Vanejeva 2.  
Імяніньніца - "Imeninnica" (III), Talbuchina 4.  
Курган - "Kurhan" (II), Pr. Lubimava 26.  
Лабірынт - "Labyrinth" (I), Partyzanski Pr. 130.



- Ладьдзя - "Ladya" (II), Pr. Rakasoúskaha 166.
- Марожанае - "Marožanae" (I), Traeckae Pradmiescie.
- Малочнае - "Maločnae" (II), Ubareviča 58.
- Малочнае - "Maločnae" (I), Ja. Kupaly 17/ 30. (*Pleasant panelled cafe in a select residential area, popular for its salads, bliny [pancakes] with different garnishes, milk soups and desserts*).
- Мядуха - "Miaducha" (I), Kirava 11.
- На Ростанях - "Na Rostaniach" (\*), Krasnaja 22. (*Faintly fatigued but comfortable neo-rustic decor, good choice of soups and main dishes. Wines and spirits [brandies, vodka] served*).
- Нёман - "Nioman" (I), Pr. Skaryny 22.
- Няміга - "Niamiha" (I), Respublikanskaja 26.
- Палац Спорта - "Dvorca Sporta" (I), Pr. Mašarava.
- Паўлінка - "Paúlinka" (II), R. Luxemburha 178.
- Паляўнічы - "Palaúničy" (I), Pr. Skaryny 46.
- Серабранка - "Serabranka" (I), Pr. Rakasaúskaha 11.
- Сьвітанак - "Svitanak" (I), Pr. Skaryny 23.
- Смажанка - "Smažanka" (I), B. Choružej 11.
- Спутнік - "Sputnik" (I), Bryleúskaja 2.
- Сталовая Белкаапсаюза - "Stalovaja", Pr. Maserava (*Lower buffet with cakes and soft drinks; deservedly popular Brasserie with recessed table areas, good quality local cuisine - soups, beef and pork escalopes, salt herrings*).
- Стары Томас - "Stary Tomas" (II), Jakuboúskaja 13.
- Раніца - "Ranica" (II), Ja. Maúra 22.
- Рэчанька - "Rečanka" (I), Pr. Mašerava 7. (*Popular restaurant on two floors; home cooking.*)
- Рабінка - "Rabinka" (I), Apanskaha 62.
- Тэатральная - "Teatralnaje" (I), M. Bahdanoviča 6.
- Утульнасьць - "Ujut" (I), Kamunističnaja 7. (*Local plain cooking, wines and spirits available* )
- Цэкоўка - "Cekoúka" [popular nick-name for an ordinary cafe near the former Central committee / Parliament building] (*Well-appointed establishment with decorative ceramic panels and reputable cuisine* )
- Яечнае - "Jaječnaje" (I), Respublikanskaja 26.



## BARS

- Батлейка - "Batlejka" (I), Pr. Skaryny 75. (*Stylish patisserie serving coffee, ice-creams, fruit cocktails, open sandwiches, cakes and other snacks. Decor includes attractively original porcelaine wall-fixtures by ceramic artists M. Bajračny and V. Pryješkin*).
- Вітамінны - "Vitaminny" (II), Mahazinnaja (Kirava) 3.
- Гарачае Малако - "Haračae malako" (I), Bahdanoviča 19.
- Гарачае Малако - "Haračae malako" (II), Kazlova 21.
- Гарачыя Бутэрброды - "Haračyja Buterbrody" (II) Kazlova 21.
- Дэсерт Бар - "Dessert Bar" (II), Uralskaja 13.
- Дэсерт Бар - "Dessert Bar" (II), Surhanava 26.
- Грыль Бар - "Grill Bar" (II), Kazinca 49a.
- Дуброва - "Dubrova" (II), Soltysa 191.
- Духмяны - "Duchmiany" (II), Franciškanskaja 22.
- Дэсерт Хол - "Dessert Hall" (II), Kalinoŭskaja 105.
- Кавярня - "Kaviarnia" (I), Kamsamolskaja 36.
- Кавярня - "Kaviarnia" (II), Staravilenskaja 6.
- Крыніца - "Krynica" (II), Ja. Kolasa 37.
- Кухон Мінскі - "Kuchon Minski" (II), Daŭhabrodskaja 3.
- Малочны - "Maločny" (II), Kozlava 14.
- Прахалода - "Prachaloda" (II), Vaneeva 28.
- Сюрпрыз - "Surprise", Zacharava 24.
- Траецкі пернік - "Traeckі pernik", M. Bahdanoviča 19.
- Чабарок - "Čabarok", A. Kašeŭskaha 10.
- Чай Бар - "Čaj Bar", Talbuchina 14.
- Ялінка - "Jalinka" (II), Vaneeva 2.

## MARKETS

- Камароўскі - "Kamaroŭski", Viera Charužej.
- Чэрвенскі - "Červienski", Majakoŭskaha 4.
- Курасоўшчынскі - "Kurasoŭščynski", Korzeneŭskaha 2.
- † Чыжоўскі - "Cyžoŭski", Taškentski Pr. 5.
- † Старажоўскі - "Starazoŭski", Čarviakova 2.

† = Seasonal summer market only (Wild berries, Mushrooms etc.).



## DEPARTMENT STORES

- Алеся - "Alesia" (Ladies ware), Pr. Mašerava 3.  
Бярозка \* - "Biarozka" (Hard currency goods and liquour), Pr. Mašerava 11.  
Вільнюс - "Vilnius" (General store), Kalinoúskaha 55.  
ГУМ \* - "SAM" [GUM] (General store), Pr. Skaryny 21.  
Дзіцячы Сьвет - "Dzičaty Svet", (Childrens store) Lahojski Trakt 25.  
Дом Вопраткі - "Dom Vopratki", (Tailors and haberdashers), Haladzeda 15.  
Дом Мэблі - "Dom Mebely" (Furniture store), Viery Charužej 6.  
Дружба - "Friendship" (Foreign books), Pr. Skaryny 91.  
Электроніка - "Elektronika" (Electronic hardware), Lahojski Trakt 21.  
Кадр - "Cadre" (Clocks and Watches), Pr. Skaryny 16.  
Крышталь \* - "Crystal" (Glassware, Crystal, ceramics), Pr. Skaryny 39.  
Мастацкі Фонд РБ - "Belarusan Art Shop" (Works of Art), Pr. Skaryny 12.  
Мінск - "Minsk" (General store), Pr. Skaryny 54 / 2.  
Мода - "Moda" (Fashion shop), Pr. Skaryny 78.  
Музыка - "Musica" (Music shop), Jakuba Kolasa 39.  
Несьцерка - "Nesterka" (Mens ware), M. Bahdanoviča 78.  
Падарункі - "Padarunki" (Gift shop), Jakuba Kolasa 32.  
Паўлінка \* - "Paŭlinka" (Souvenirs), Pr. Skaryny 19.  
Першамайскі - "Peršamajski" (General store), Pr. Skaryny 76.  
Радыётэхніка - "Radiotechnika" (Radio shop), Apanskaha 4.  
Сьветач - "Svietač" (Books), Pr. Mašerava 11.  
Спорт Турызм - "Sport Tourism" (Sportswear), Prytickaha 42.  
Сувеніры - "Souvenirs" (Souvenir shop), Valadarskaha 13.  
Турыст - "Tourist" (Tourist shop), Talbuchina 12.  
Усход-1 - "Uschod - 1" (General store), Kalinoúskaha 66a.  
Універмаг "Беларусь" - "Univermah Belaruś" (General store), Žylunoviča 4.  
Цэнтральны Кніжны - "Central Bookshop" (Books), Pr. Skaryny 19.

## FOOD STORES

- Універсам "Рыга" - Universam "Riga", Surhanava 50  
Гастраном - "Gastronome", Pr. Skaryny 89.  
Універсам "Заслаўе" - Universam "Zaslaúe", Pr. Mašerava 49.  
Гастраном "Сталічны" - "Staličny", Pr. Skaryny 52.  
"Акіян" - "Ocean", Kazlova 2.  
"Рамонак" - "Ramaška" [*cakes and pastries* ], Pr. Mašerava 7.



Універсам "Фрунзенскі" - Universam "Frunzenski", Pr. Puškina 37.  
Універсам "Гародня" - Universam "Harodnia", Adzincava 20.  
Універсам "Цэнтральны" - Universam "Centralny", Pr. Skaryny 26.  
"Лакамка" - "Lakamka", Pr. Skaryny 19.  
Універсам - Universam, Nesteroú 60a.  
Універсам "Паўднёвы-Захад" - Universam "Paúdniovy-Zachad", Pr.  
Haziety "Praúda" 14a.  
Універсам "Серабранка" - Universam "Sierabranka", Plachanava 89.  
Універсам - Universam, Asanalieva 40.  
Гастронам - Gastronome, Taškentskaja 10.



# **ADMINISTRATIVE, PROFESSIONAL AND COMMERCIAL DIRECTORY**



# **CHURCHES AND PLACES OF WORSHIP**

## **CHRISTIAN**

- St. Euphrosyne of Polacak**, *Belarusan Greek-Catholic (Uniate)*, vul. Mala-Bernardynskaja (*Herzena*) 1.
- Holy Trinity and St Roch**, *Roman Catholic*, Pr. F. Skaryny, 44a.
- Maryjnski Cathedral**, *Roman Catholic*, (*under restoration*) Plac Katedralny, 9.
- St. Simeon and St. Helena**, *Roman Catholic*, Plac Niezaležnaści, 15.
- Calvary Church**, *Roman Catholic*, vul. Apanskaha.
- Holy Ghost Cathedral**, *Russian Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate)*, vul. Bernardynskaja, (*Bakunina*) 3 - 5.
- S. Alexander Nevski**, *Russian Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate)*, vul. Dolhabrodskaja (*Kazlova*)
- St Mary Magdalene**, *Russian Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate)*, vul. Starazeúskaja
- SS Peter and Paul**, *Russian Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate)*, vul. Astroúskaha 4.
- Baptist Union of Belaruś**: Puciappravodny zavul. 2. Tel: 01-72-539267 (*for enquiries*)
- Belarusan Evangelical Church**: c/o Pushkin Library, Skaryna Avenue, Ja. Kolas Pl. Tel: 01-72-708987 (*for enquiries*)

## **JEWISH**

- Synagogue**, *Minsk Hebrew Community*, vul. Krapotkina 22

## **MUSLIM**

- Al Kitab Association** c/o Jakub Jakuboúski. 220090 Minsk, Lahojski Trakt 27 / 77 (*for enquiries*)

## **OTHERS**

- Buddhist**: c/o MDUP Vittur Lotas, 210009 Viciebsk, Pr. Frunze 62 / 54 (*for enquiries*)



# **MINISTRIES AND PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS**

## ***MINISTRIES***

**Supreme Council (Parliament) of the Republic of Belaruś** - Viarchoúny Saviet Respubliki Belaruś, 220016 Minsk, vul. K. Marxa 38. Tel: 01-72-293313; Fax: 273784.

**Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belaruś** - Saviet Ministraú Respubliki Belaruś, 220010 Minsk, Dom Urada Tel: 01-72-296007 (Secretariat).

**Ministry of Agriculture** - Ministersta Sielskaj Haspadarki i Charčavannia 20031 Minsk, vul. Kirava 15 Tel: 01-72-273751; Fax: 275388

**Ministry of Culture** - Ministerstva Kultury, 220010 Minsk, vul. Savieckaja 9 Tel: 01-72-296890 Fax: 209125.

**Ministry of Commerce** - Ministersta Handlu, 220050 Minsk, vul. Kirava 8, block 1. Tel: 01-72-276121; 271454 (Foreign trade).

**Ministry of Communications and Information** - Ministerstva Suviazy i Infarmatyki 220050 Minsk, pr. Skaryny 10. Tel: 01-72-273751; Fax: 275388

**Ministry of Construction** - Ministerstva Budaúnictva, 220097 Minsk, vul. Miasnikava 39. Tel: 01-72-272642; 265414 (Foreign relations).

**Ministry for the Construction and Exploitation of Motorways** - Ministerstva Budaúnictva i Ekspluataccyi Aútamabilnych Daroh 220097 Minsk, vul. Miasnikava 29. Tel: 01-72- 208694; Fax: 208695.

**Ministry of Education** - Ministerstva Adukacyi 220010 Minsk, vul. Savieckaja 9. Tel: 01-72-274736; Fax: 208057

**Ministry of Finance** - Ministerstva Finansau 220010 Minsk, vul. Savieckaja, 11, Dom Urada Tel: 01-72- 296137.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs** - Ministerstva Zamiežnych Spraú 220030 Minsk vul. Lenina 19 Tel: 01-72-272941; Fax: 274521

**Ministry for Forestry Affairs** - Ministerstva Lasnaj Haspadarki 220039 Minsk vul. Čkalava 6. Tel: 01-72-244705; 244706 (Foreign relations).

**Minsitry of Health** - Ministerstva Achovy Zdarouja 220010 Minsk vul. Miasnikova 39. Dom Urada. 01-72-296095; Fax: 296297.

**Ministry of Housing** 220640 Minsk, vul. Herzena 16. Tel: 01-72-201545

**Ministry of Information** - Ministerstva Infarmacyi 220617 Minsk, Pr.



Mašerava 11 Tel: 01-72- 237574

**Ministry of Justice** - Ministerstva Justycyi 220084 Minsk, vul. Kalektarnaja 10.  
Tel: 01-72-209755

**Ministry of Light Industries** - Ministerstva Lehkaj Pramyslovasci  
220050 Minsk, vul. Cetkin 16. Tel: 01-72-203065; 209062 (For-  
eign relations); Fax: 207962.

**Ministry of Resources** - Ministerstva Resursaú 220855 Minsk, vul. Kazinca 4.  
Tel: 01-72-788017; Fax: 260084.

**Ministry of Social Security** - Ministerstva Sacyjalnaha Zabiespiačennia  
220010 Minsk, vul. Savieckaja 9. Tel: 001-72-208542.

**Ministry of Transport** - Ministerstva Transpartu 220612 Minsk, vul.  
Valadarskaha 8 Tel:01-72-271642

## ***PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS***

**Belarusan Intourist Commission** - Inturist RB. 220078 Minsk, Pr.  
Mašerava 19. Tel: 01-72-269840; Fax: 252144 TUR.

**Chamber of Commerce and Industry RB**, 220600 Minsk, Pr. Mašerava 14.  
Tel: 01-72-269937; 269187; Fax: 01-72-269936; Telex: 252190 MARA.

**Customs Control Office** - Arhany RB. 220004 Minsk vul. Astroúskaha 2a  
Tel: 01-72-203822 (Secretariat) Telex: 300151 Ščyt.

**State Committee for Architecture and Construction** - 220030 Minsk,  
vul. Karl Marx 32. Tel: 01-72-278012

**State Committee for Customs** - 220123 Minsk, vul. Charužaj 29. Tel:  
01-72-344355.

**State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations** - 220600 Minsk, vul.  
Lenina 14. Tel: 01-72-241758; Fax: 01-72-273924.

**State Committee for Statistics** - 220658 Minsk, Pr. Partyzanski 22a  
Tel: 01-72-491261

**State Committee for the Ecology** - 220084 Minsk vul. Kalektarnaja 10.  
Tel: 01-72- 206620; 207620 (Foreign relations).

**State Committee for the Economy and Planning**, - 220010 Minsk, Dom  
Urada, Tel: 01-72-296944; 296701 (Foreign relations).

**State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations** - 220010 Minsk,  
Dom Urada Tel: 01-72-241758; Fax: 273924.

**State Committee for Labour and Social Protection of the Population**  
- 220050 Minsk, Pr. Mašerava 23 Fax: 01-72-234521.

**State Committee for Physical Culture and Sport** - 220600 Minsk, vul.  
Kirava 87 block 2 Tel: 01-72-277237; Fax: 276184.

**Supreme Economic Court of the Republic of Belaruś.** Minsk, vul  
Kalektornaja 10, Tel: 01-72-205262



## **INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

- National University of Belaruś** - Pr. Skaryny 4.  
**National Conservatoire of Belaruś** - vul. Internacyjanalnaja 30.  
**Belarusan Institute of Mechanised Rural Economy** - Pr. Skaryny 99  
**Belarusan Technological Institute** - vul. Sviardlova 13a.  
**Belarusan Institute of Physical Culture** - Pr. Mašerava 105.  
**Belarusan State Institute of Theatrical Art** - Pr. Skaryny 81.  
**Minsk Pedagogical Institute** - vul. Savieckaja 18.  
**Minsk Polytechnical Institute** - Pr. Skaryny 65  
**Minsk Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages** - vul. Zacharava 21.  
**Minsk Institute of Management** - vul. Padhornaja (*K. Marxa*) 31.  
**Minsk Institute of Radio-technology.** - vul. P. Broúki 6.  
**Minsk Institute of Culture** - vul. Rabkaroúskaja 17.  
**Minsk Institute of National economy** - Partyzanski Pr. 26.  
**Minsk Medical Institute** - Pr. Hazieta *Pravdy*, 13.

## **FOREIGN EMBASSIES & TRADE DELEGATIONS**

- Ambasada Respubliki Balharyja** - Bulgarian Embassy, 220034 Minsk, zavul. Braniavy 5. Tel: 01-72-275502; 365661; 367615.  
**Ambasada Federatiúnaja Respubliki Niameččyna** - German Embassy, 220034 Minsk, vul. Zacharava 26. Tel: 330752; 332714.  
**Ambasada Francuzskaj Respubliki** - French Embassy, 220034 Minsk, vul. Staražoúskaja 15 (Hatel "Belaruś"). Tel: 01-72-690602.  
**Amasada Resp. Indyja** - Indian Embassy, 220034 Minsk, Pr. Mašerava 31 (Hotel "Planeta") Tel: 01-72- 268366  
**Ambasada Italjanskaj Respubliki** - Italian Embassy, 220034 Minsk, vul. Staražoúskaja 15 (Hatel "Belaruś"). Tel: 01-72-690506.  
**Ambasada Kitajskaj Narodnaj Respubliki** - Chinese Embassy, 220091 Minsk, Pradstaúnicki haradok "Drazdy". Tel: 01-72-376731; 376631.  
**Ambasada Resp. Polšča** - Polish Embassy, 220034 Minsk, vul. Rumiancava 6. Tel: 01-72-331313; 331114; 335109; 333601.  
**Ambasada Rumynii** - Rumanian Embassy, 220091 Minsk, Drazdy d.21,



kv.2. Tel: 01-72-238364.

**Ambasada Tureckaj Respubliki** - Turkish Embassy, 220034 Minsk, Vul. Starażoúskaja 15 (Hatel "Belaruś"), Tel: 01-72-391588.

**Ambasada Ukrainy** - Ukrainian Embassy, 220034 Minsk, vul. Kirava,, Tel: 01-72-367094; 367304.

**Ambasada ZŽA** - US Embassy, 220034 Minsk, vul. Staravilenskaja 46, Tel: 01-72-346537; 347642.

**Izrailski Kulturna-infarmacyjny centr** - Israeli Cultural Information Office, Minsk, vul. Kisialova 20. Tel: 01-72-276315.

**Kansulat Vialikaj Britanii** - British Consular Service, 220034 Minsk, vul. Zacharava 26.

**Karejskaja Narodna-Demakratyčnaja Respublika** - North Korean Trade Delegation. 220026 Minsk, Partyzanski Pr. d. 83, kv. 59. Tel: 01-72-451358; Fax: 252494.

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

### ***INFORMATION***

**S.P. Yellow Pages** Trades Directory (in English), Minsk. For enquiries - Tel: 01-72-546878, 543142

### ***BANKS***

**Ašadny Bank** (Savings Bank), 220048 Minsk, vul. Kalektarnaja 10. Tel: 01-72-209258 (reception)

**Belaruski akcyjanernny kamercyjny ahrarna-pramyslovy Bank** (Agricultural and commercial Bank), 220008 Minsk, Pr. Skaryny 20. Tel: 01-72- 271801 (reception).

**Belbiznes Bank** (Investment Bank), 220002 Minsk, vul. Kiselova 61a. Tel: 01-72-686687; Fax: 344598.

**Belaruski Bank vonkaekanamyčnaj dziejnasci** (Foreign economic affairs)., 220008 Minsk, vul. Zaslaúskaja 10 Tel: 269757 (reception).

**Nacyjanalny Bank** (National Bank), 220008 Minsk, Pr. Skaryny 20. Tel: 01-72-270946 (reception).

**Prior Bank AKB** (Bureaux de Change): HUM (3rd Fl.) Minsk, 21 Pr. Skaryny.; "Centralny" Cinema, Pr. Skaryna 13; Hotel "Tourist" (Foyer), Partizanski Praspekt 81; "Vesta", Radialnaja 38a.

**Dukat AKB** (Merchant Bank), 220030 Minsk, vul. Kastryčnickaja 5.



Tel: 01-71-207920; 205766; 264557.

## **STOCK MARKET**

*A Stock Exchange is in the process of organisation in Minsk. Enquiries regarding share transactions are best directed through an established Belarusian Bank.*

## **BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS**

**Union of Entrepreneurs of RB**, 220050 Minsk, vul. Internacyjanalnaja 13.  
Tel: 01-72-231314; 271483; Fax: 01-72-271596; Telex 300494  
FIORD.

**Union of Cooperatives**, 220600 Minsk, Vajskovy zavul. 12. Tel: 0172-391290.

**Union of Small Businesses**, 220010 Minsk, vul. Bersona 1, pakoj 211.  
Tel: 01-72-203402.

## **LEGAL PROFESSIONS**

**Association of Advocates** - Sajuz advakataŭ RB, 220050 Minsk, vul. Internacyjanalnaja 12. Tel.01-72-232496 (President).

**Association of Lawyers** - Sajuz Jurystaŭ RB, 220050 Minsk, vul. Karla Marxa 24 - 24. Tel: 01-72-275624

**City of Minsk Faculty of Advocates** - Minskaja Harodskaja kalehyja advakataŭ, 220001 Minsk, vul. Internacyjanalnaja 12. Tel: 01-72-232584 (Chairman); 266388.

**County of Minsk Faculty of Advocates** - Minskaja Voblaŭskaja Kalehyja advakataŭ, 220001 Minsk, vul. Vaksalnaja 44a. Tel: 01-72- 206183 (Chairman).

**Corporation of International Lawyers** - Belzamjurkalehyja, Minsk, vul. Bahdanoviča 70. Tel: 01-72- 344508.

**Notarial Offices** - Peršaja Minskaja Haradskaja Džiaržaŭnaja nataryjalnaja kantora, 220092 Minsk, vul. D. Marcynkieviča 1. Tel: 0172-521020 (Chief Notary); 5221863 (Deputy).



## ***PRESS and PUBLISHING HOUSES***

**Cyrvonnaja Zmiena** (circ. 20.000) 220241 Minsk, Pr. Skaryny 77. Tel: 0172-321354.

**Holas Radzimy** (International) (circ. 5.000) - 220600 Minsk, Pr. Skaryny 44. Tel: 01-72-330197.

**Hramada** (circ. 50.000) - 220016 Minsk, Partysanski Pr. 83 / 53.

**Litaratura i Mastactva** (Weekly) (circ. 15.000) 220600 HSP Minsk, Zacharava 19. Tel: 332461.

**Narodnaja Hazeta** (Official Gazette) [*circ.* 400.865 ] - 220010, Minsk, Dom Urada, Plac Niezaležnasci. Tel: 01-72-296086 (reception); 293405 (advertising); Fax: 273763.

**National Press Centre** - Minsk, Kastryčnickaja 5

**Zviazda** [ *circ.* 81.000 ] - 220041 Minsk, Pr. Skaryny 77. Tel: 01-72-325105 (reception); 323591 (advertising) Fax: 322203.

**Belaruś** - Minsk, Parkavaja Mahystral 11.

**Mastackaja Litatatura** - 220600 Minsk, Pr. Mašerava 11.

**Navuka i Technika** - Science and Technology Press, 220600 Minsk, Pr. Skaryny 68.

**Polymia** - 220600 Minsk, Pr. Mašerava 11.

**Vydaviectva BelSE** - Belarusian Encyclopedia Press, 220600 Minsk, Akademičnaja 15a.

**Vydaviectva "Uradžaj"** - Minsk, Instrumentalnaja zavul. 11.

## ***PROPERTY - FREEHOLD & LEASEHOLD***

**S. P. Belinor** (Construction of houses and cottages). Minsk. Tel: 01-72-237076; 267664; 239337.



## **COMMERCIAL, BUSINESS AND CULTURAL ENTERPRISES**

### ***FOREIGN TRADING & SERVICE COMPANIES***

- Amtel Exports (Singapore) Ltd** (Export Import) 220029 Minsk, Hotel "Belarus", vul. Staražeúskaja 15. Tel: 01-72-690702
- Bayer Austria GmbH** (Chemicals) 220030 Minsk, vul. Engelsa 17, pakoj 405. Tel: 01-72-277586
- Elegant Logic Inc** (USA)
- Farbwerke Hoechst AG** (Paint manufacturers) 220092 Minsk, Orbita Hotel, room 1205 Pr. Puškina 39.
- International Aerospace ventures Inc.** (USA) 220029 Minsk, Kisialova 7 / 11. Tel: 01-72-366575,
- Korean Trade Leader Co. Ltd.** (Export Import) 220091 Minsk, "Drozdy" 18. Tel: 01-72-239950.
- OGG Schramm & Stirnat** (Wirtschaftsdienst Import u.Export), 220032 vul. Parnikovaja 20. Tel: 01-72-645471
- Spezialbau GmbH** (Construction) 220102 Minsk, Pr. Partyzanski 144 Tel: 01-72-427207.

### ***BELARUSAN TRADING & SERVICE COMPANIES***

- Belaútamaz** (Minsk Automobile and Motor Works), 220831 Minsk, vul. Socialistyčnaja 2. Tel: 01-72-469608; Fax: 460490.
- MinskvenešServis** (Industrial and Trade Advisory services), 220113 Minsk, vul. J. Kolasa 65 Tel: 01-72-660473; Fax: 662604.
- Minsk-Expo** (Trade Exhibition services), Minsk, Pr. Mašeravá 14, Tel: 0172-269084; Fax: 269936.
- Pečaty i Štempy** (Company seals and stamps), Minsk, zavul. Kalinina 12. Tel: 0172-335138.
- Tourist Firm Susvet-Tour** (Tourism in Belaruś, Baltic States, Russia, Ukraine). 220050 Minsk, vul. Kamsamolskaja 5. Tel: 01-72-536034; 235172; Fax: 209125 SUSVET

### ***MISCELLANEOUS ASSOCIATIONS: OTHER USEFUL ADDRESSES***

- Association of Belarusan Nobility - Tavarystva Belaruskaha Dvarianstva** 220001 Minsk, c/o. Prof. A. Hryckievič, Radkoremskaja 17.



- Association of Belarusian Scouts - Abjadnannia Belaruskich Skaútaú,**  
220141 Minsk, c/o A. Lozka, Rucijanava 50 / 411.
- Belarusian Association for relations with Belarusians abroad -**  
Tavarystva "Radzima", Minsk
- Belarusian Catholic Society - Belaruskaja Katalickaja Hramada c/o**  
Chryscijanskaja Dumka, V. Čaropka, 220029 Minsk, M.  
Bahdanoviča 7a. Tel: 01-72-340761.
- Belarusian Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church -** 220004 Minsk,  
Vyzvalennie 10.
- Belarusian Heraldry Information - Belaruskaja Heraldika c/o A. Citoú,**  
220073 Minsk, Aršeúskaha 3 block 1 appt. 15. Tel: 01-72-528368.
- Belarusian Language Society - Tavarystva Belaruskaj Movy im. F.**  
Skaryny, 220005 Minsk, Rumiancava 13. Tel: 01-72-331783.
- Belarusian Philatelic Information - Belaruskí Kalekcyjaner, 220131**  
Minsk, c/o Ul. Siarožkin PO Box / P. skr. No. 229. Tel: 01-72-  
612178.
- Belarusian Uniate (Greek Catholic) Youth -** 220050 Minsk 50, PO Box/  
Ab. skr. No. 224.

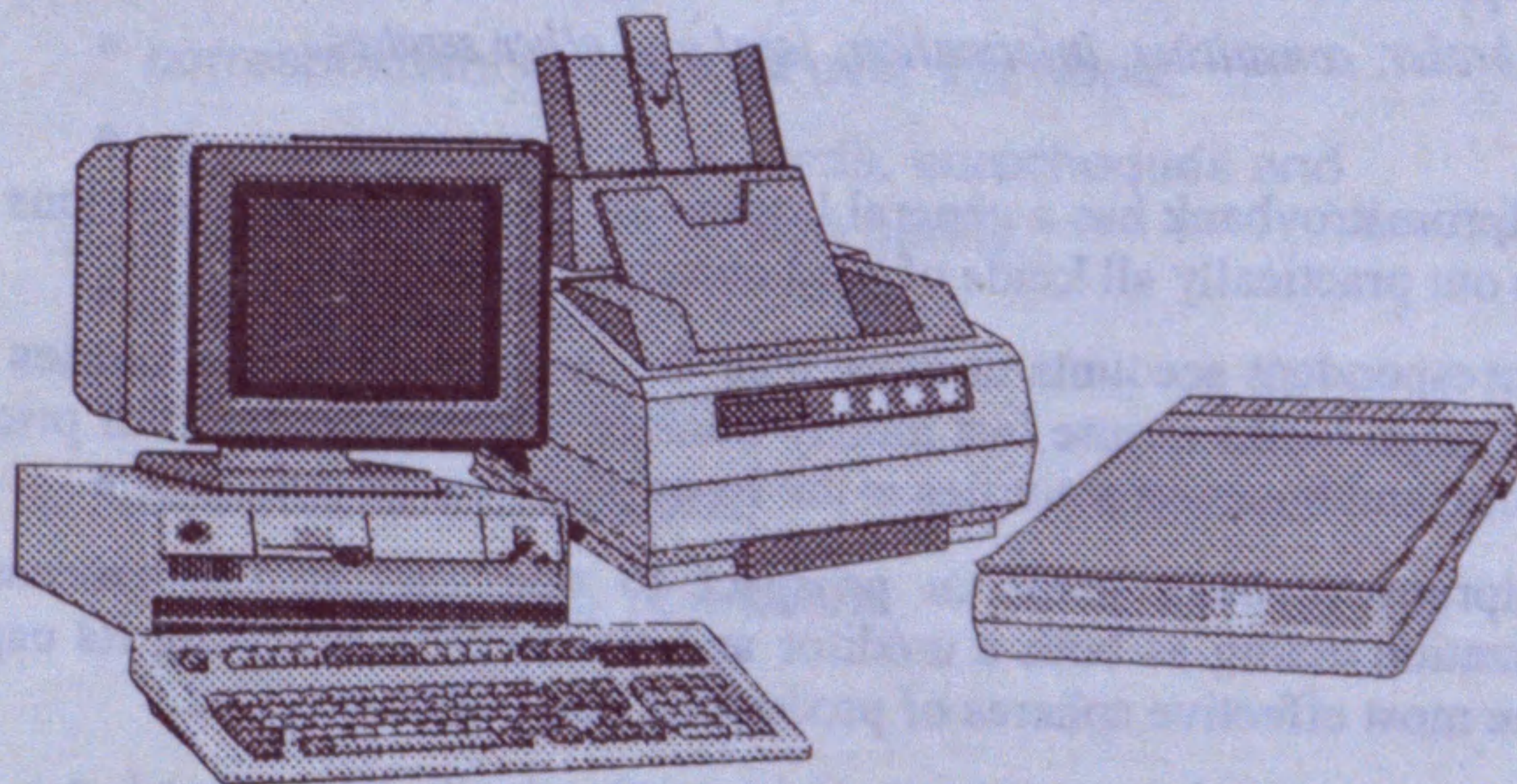


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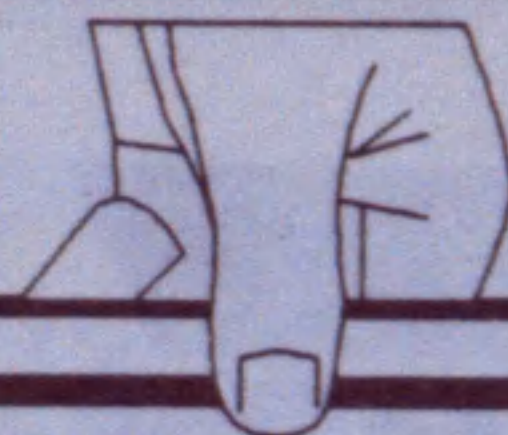
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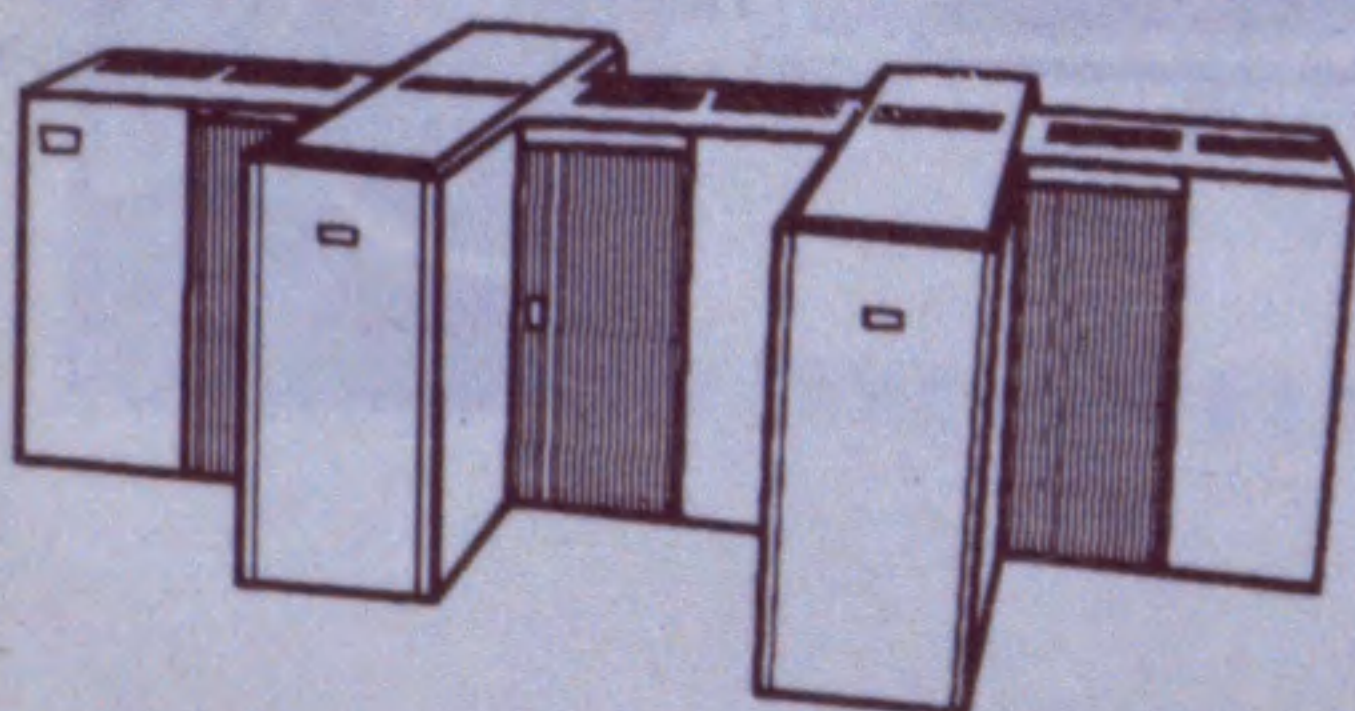
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